

**EDUCATORS' EXPERIENCE OF TRANSFORMATION AND CHANGE IN A FULL  
SERVICE PRIMARY SCHOOL**

by

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ADDENDUM B:	Letter of permission from the Gauteng Department of Education(GDE)
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ADDENDUM D:	Letter to the School Governing Body
ADDENDUM E:	Letter to educator participants and Consent Form
ADDENDUM F:	Interview schedule for individual interviews and focus groups
ADDENDUM G:	Narrative account brief

## DECLARATION

Student number: 08632618

I declare that **EDUCATORS ' EXPERIENCE OF TRANSFORMATION AND CHANGE IN A FULL SERVICE PRIMARY SCHOOL** is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.



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SIGNATURE  
(Mrs B A Feldman)

27 February 2014  
DATE



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## **ABSTRACT**

In the nineteen years of South Africa's democracy, its education system, as a vehicle for political, economic and social reform, has been characterised by transformation and change. Educators, as policy implementers, have been integral to that process. For the educators at the school selected for this study, changes have included, among others, frequent curriculum revision; a different approach to assessment; changes in school management as well as making a transition from a mainstream to a full service school, focused on the inclusion of learners who experience mild to moderate barriers to learning. Against this background the purpose of this study was to explore the subjective experience of educators in this particular school, and the subsequent impact that aspects of curriculum change and educational reform may have had on them; then secondly to put practices in place that would enable them to positively embrace new ideas, create knowledge and share ideas as educators. The study was conducted with 21 educators at a full service school. The research findings show them to be overloaded with administrative tasks as pressure is put on them to present evidence of their competence and functionality; many of them were tired, confused or angry. They felt rushed and obligated to implement a curriculum that they perceive to compromise effective teaching and learning; and ultimately, the learners.

**KEYWORDS:** transformation, curriculum change, inclusion, new assessment methods, increased workload, educator competence and accountability, paperwork and administrative tasks, full service school

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# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTORY ORIENTATION

### 1.1 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

In the 19 years of South Africa's democracy and for the decade leading up to it the educational landscape has been marked by change and transformation. Political, social and economic change necessitates the establishment of an education system that evolves and adapts to meet global and national standards and ideologies (Hoadley & Jansen, 2002). Change in education is both essential and inevitable, as a vehicle for the promotion of a national consciousness, global competence, social responsibility, citizenship, morality and empowerment. Great responsibility lies with educators as the agents of that change within an education system.<sup>1</sup>

According to Evans (1996:28), significant change "almost always means loss and causes a kind of bereavement", a notion supported by Fullan (2001:30), who suggests that we do not always consider that change is multi-dimensional and that whether voluntary or not it involves loss, anxiety and struggle. When viewed in the context of changes that South African educators have experienced in the last 20 years, one may assume that they have had emotional and cognitive effects of systematic and continuous change as a consequence of their task as both agents and objects of political, social and ideological change.

This study will explore the experiences of educators at a primary full service school in Gauteng, determining what they can do to make it easier to manage the changes, as well as what other stakeholders in the system can do to support them. To this purpose the role of the Institutional Level Support Team (ILST) may be instrumental in facilitating this process. Education White Paper 6 (2001) defines ILSTs as teams established by institutions in general, further and higher education as an institution-level support mechanism whose primary function it is to put in place co-ordinated

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<sup>1</sup> The words 'educator' and 'teacher' are used interchangeably throughout the study and both refer to classroom-based facilitators and mediators of learning. In the most recent curriculum, the terminology introduced with Outcomes Based Education (OBE) is replaced by that used in the previous education system. Educators are called 'teachers' again and learning areas 'subjects'.

school, learner and educator support services for the learning and teaching process by identifying and addressing their needs.

At the school in which the research was conducted this team is referred to as the School Based Support Team (SBST), and consisted of a psychometrist (or counsellor); an occupational therapist; three learning support teachers (the deputy principal, head of department (HOD) for Guidance, and an intern psychologist, who is also the researcher); the principal; and any educators included as the need arose.

It is beyond the scope of this study to examine all the factors or changes impacting on educators, even though they are interrelated. The focus, however, is primarily on policy change with regard to curriculum and inclusion.

## **1.2 AWARENESS OF THE PROBLEM**

In existence for 71 years, the school chosen for this study has a rich history that spans decades of change. Prolific change since 1994 is characteristic of all government departments and institutions as new legislation, frameworks and policies were implemented following the ratification of the new Constitution. As with most organisations and individuals, change is an inherent characteristic. The educators at the school being studied had, in the previous five years, experienced the following significant changes.

### **i) Curriculum change**

The educators are once again engaged in the process of implementing a revised national curriculum, titled 'Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements' (CAPS). These were or were due to be introduced in Grades 1, 2, 3 and 10 (2012); Grades 4, 5, 6 and 9 (2013) and Grades 7 and 8 (2014). Prior to this, educators had implemented 'Foundations for Learning' for two years, as a revision of the Revised National Curriculum Statements which they had implemented for two years previously. The Department of Basic Education<sup>2</sup> (DBE, 2011) defines CAPS as a single, comprehensive and concise policy document, which will replace the current Subject and Learning Area Statements, Learning Programme Guidelines and

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<sup>2</sup> Department of Education (DoE) is now called Department of Basic Education (DBE)

Subject Assessment Guidelines for all the subjects listed in the National Curriculum Statements Grades R to 12.

Educators who have been teaching for more than 20 years have also made the transition from the segregated Christian National Education (CNE) policy of the previous government and the 19<sup>3</sup> different education departments under Outcomes Based Education (OBE) under an integrated central education department (Van Zyl, in Van Wyk & Lemmer, 2002). The change from CNE to OBE required that educators make a paradigm shift because the two systems were grounded in two different philosophies and so took different approaches. This is explained in more detail in Chapter 2.

## **ii) Transition from mainstream to full service school**

In 2011 the school under discussion underwent a transition from mainstream to full service, accompanied by an increase in administrative paperwork in order to provide evidence of support as well as for monitoring and evaluation purposes. The inclusion of learners with mild to moderate barriers to learning, such as cerebral palsy, behavioural, emotional and learning disorders, required more specialised teaching in order to accommodate their needs.

Full service schools are ordinary schools which are specially equipped to address a full range of barriers to learning in an inclusive education setting (Thutong; DoE), ideally suited to supporting learners with mild to moderate barriers to learning. Education White Paper 6 (2001) called initially for at least one primary school in a selection of 30 districts to be identified and designated as full service, then based on lessons learnt from this sample, 500 were to be selected for conversion. In this selection, particular attention will be paid to the mobilisation of community and parent participation so that all social partners and role players can become part of the process of developing these schools. The school at which this study was conducted is the primary school selected to be a full service school in that particular district.

## **iii) Focus on inclusion of learners who experience barriers to learning**

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<sup>3</sup> Chisholm, (2004) counts 18, Dada, Dipholo, Hoadley, Khembo, Muller and Volmink (2009:11) 17, an inconsistency that is not the researcher's.

Bornman and Rose (2010:6) pose the questions:

Is inclusion about place, curriculum, acceptance or participation? Is it about implementing policies such as Education White Paper 6 (2001)? Is it about addressing 'Barriers to learning'? Is inclusion about teachers who are trained in specialist psychologically based pedagogy or about regular teachers who require additional skills? It is about all these things and more – hence the notion of inclusion as a 'bewildering concept. (Lawson, Parker & Sikes, 2006, in Bornman & Rose, 2010)

Inclusion in the South African context refers to the right of all learners to have access to education (Education for All) and focuses particularly on those learners who have been excluded from regular schooling because of factors such as race, gender, poverty and disability (Engelbrecht, Green, Naicker & Engelbrecht, 1999).

#### **iv) Migration of learners across language barriers**

The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa Act No 108 of 1996 guarantees all learners the right to be taught and to learn in the language of their choice. The implication of this for both learners and educators is that often capable learners underperform because they are not sufficiently proficient in the language of learning and teaching (LOLT) of the school. Educators are expected to manage and create multi-lingual learning environments but are unable to support learners in languages in which they themselves are not proficient.

#### **v) Changes in management and governance**

The school has undergone three management changes in quick succession, which may have impacted on the educators in some way. In the last six years the school has employed three principals, each with differing management styles to which educators have had to adapt and adjust. The deputy principal changed and a second deputy post was created and filled. The implication of this is that the entire top management structure changed within a period of five years.

The South African School's Act (1996:B-16) makes provision for School Governing Bodies (SGBs) to be re-elected every three years, responsible for governance of the

school including functions such as maintenance, finance, staff appointments, drafting a code of conduct and developing a mission and vision. Changes in school governance and governors impact educators, particularly those who are employed by the SGB as contracts and agreements need to be renegotiated and revised. While this is a common and necessary practice it may cause the educators involved to experience anxiety and insecurity related to the certainty of their posts.

### **1.3 PRELIMINARY LITERATURE STUDY**

Much research has been conducted on teacher attitudes (see Motala, 2010), on the challenges educators face in implementing inclusion (Eloff & Kgwethe, 2007; Ladbrook, 2009; Lessing & De Witt, 2010; M. Nel, 2007; N. Nel, 2011), on how principals and districts need to manage and ensure that change is implemented (Ndou, 2009; Mchunu, 2010), and on the role of a school HoD in alleviating teacher stress (Ngobeneni (2006). Despite substantial reports of review committees commissioned by the government and state agencies to investigate the state of affairs in education in South Africa, particularly with regard to curriculum reform and educator workload, little research has been carried out on how South African educators are coping with and managing the changes inherent in transformation, curriculum change and inclusive practices. These will be discussed more fully in chapter 2.

Crawford, Bennet and Riches (1992) suggest that change relates not only to the creation of new policies and procedures to implement external mandates, but also to the strategies by which individuals respond to structural and cultural change; personal and organisational change; the place of values in framing organisational form and culture; and individual and group responses to the pressures they feel. In the context of change in the South African education system, this may suggest that in addition to implementing new policies, educators require strategies to enable them to respond to the changes. They may need to undergo personal change as the system in which they work changes, with their values and belief systems playing a role in their participation in and contribution to the new system. These may also determine the degree to which they will cope with the pressures inherent in such change.



In 1990, at a time when South Africa was on the brink of a political revolution, global changes in education were becoming prominent. A global shift in awareness to promote the rights of all persons to be included in education regardless of race, gender or disability was enshrined in the signing and ratification of The World Declaration on Education for All (EFA) at Jomtien, Thailand. Whilst 155 countries signed, South Africa was not present due its own political struggle to overthrow apartheid, but in 1994 South Africa officially joined the global movement through its presence at The World Conference on Special Needs in Salamanca, Spain. Policies were about to change and educators would have to facilitate that change at grassroots level.

In 1996, ratification of the Constitution for the Republic of South Africa heralded a new era in the ideology and policy that governed its citizens. The human rights and equality of all were to be entrenched in every law, policy and public service, with educators having to ensure that the new ideology would permeate society through its education system. As argued by Paolo Freire (1993), curriculum is a vehicle to transform society and promote political ideology. To this end, 1996 saw the passing of the National Education Policy Act, which was pivotal in facilitating the democratic transformation of the national system of education, as well as the South African School's Act (SASA), which replaced education acts of the apartheid government (EFA Assessment Report 2000). Education White Paper 6 on Special Needs Education: Building an Inclusive Education and Training System (2001) provided a framework for establishing an inclusive education and training system.

Financial and material resources were made available to the school identified for this study to enable and facilitate the changes and provide resources that would be required to transform it into a full service school. Collaborative efforts between the district, SGB and the school management team, among other stakeholders, began the process of preparing the school, the community and all stakeholders for its new profile as a flagship for inclusion. Learners of all races, gender, socio-economic and socio-cultural groups, as well as those experiencing mild to moderate barriers to learning, including physical, cognitive, learning and behavioural or emotional barriers, formed part of the school community. It was therefore an inclusive environment, requiring at its most basic level implementation by educators in classrooms. Inclusion in school involves changing attitudes, behaviour, teaching

methods, curricula and environment to meet the needs of all learners (Education White Paper 6:7).

In the South African context, transformation in education reflected and promoted a social and political conscience that was vital to bringing about the necessary reform, however, pertinent questions arise: How are educators, the implementers, coping with the stress related to this change? What can they do to manage it more effectively and how can they be supported in this endeavour? According to Hoadley and Jansen (2005:81), it is vital to engage, communicate with, and support educators from the outset in attempting to transform the curriculum. This study will be limited to exploring this question with specific focus on the current educators at the full service school selected for this study.

#### **1.4 RESEARCH QUESTION**

In view of the preceding discussion the following research question is posed:

- What are the experiences of educators at a full service primary school with regard to transformation and continuous occupational related change?

In order to address the research question, the following objectives will be considered:

- What major changes have occurred in the education system in South Africa since 1994?
- What characterises the current school system with regard to different types of schools, as designated by White Paper 6, for the inclusion of learners who experience barriers to learning?
- Which changes are impacting on educators most significantly?
- What are the views of educators teaching at a full service school with regard to transitioning from a mainstream to a full service school?
- What are educators' current feelings towards their profession?
- To what extent do educators feel supported by other stakeholders in the school and broader education system?

- What recommendations can be made to educators and other stakeholders at a full service school to facilitate the management of change more effectively, in support of educators?

## **1.5 RESEARCH AIMS**

The following aims can be derived from the research question and the subsequent sub-questions as posed above:

- To explore how educators at a full service primary school are experiencing transformation and continuous occupational related change.
- To describe and acknowledge the changes that have occurred in the education system since 1994.
- To discuss the characteristics of different types of schools as designated by White Paper 6, for the inclusion of learners who experience barriers to learning.
- To explore the changes impacting educators most significantly.
- To explore the views of educators at a full service school with regard to the transition from a mainstream to a full service school.
- To determine what educators' current feelings are towards their profession.
- To determine the extent to which educators feel supported by other stakeholders in the school and broader education system.
- To make recommendations to educators and other stakeholders at a full service school to facilitate the management of change more effectively, in support of educators.

Fullan (2001: xi) asserts that "Schools are beginning to discover that new ideas, knowledge creation and sharing are essential to solving learning problems in a rapidly changing society". To this purpose, the general aim of the study is, firstly, to explore the changes as experienced by educators at this school and the subsequent impact that the identified changes have had on them; secondly to put practices in place that will enable them to positively embrace new ideas, create knowledge and share ideas as educators.

Kurt Lewin's three phase model of change, as well as his Group dynamic theory will be used as theoretical framework for the study.

## **1.6 MOTIVATION FOR THE STUDY**

As a member of staff at this school, and in my roles as one of the learning support educators and intern psychologist, I interact with many of the educators frequently. They feel a combination of both negative and positive feelings, but usually appear overwhelmed, tired, frustrated and even angry. The emotional wellbeing of many educators is at risk, as chronic fatigue, hypertension and depression may be exacerbated by occupational conditions. In addition to the external changes, the current discourse in South Africa relates to parenting and *in-loco-parentis* circumstances, for example, the role of educators in promoting the rights of children above any other.

Educators are at the forefront of experiencing changes in society because they engage with children, who reflect them, on a daily basis. Change is inevitable and without it there can be no growth or development, albeit the impact can be negative or positive. This study seeks to determine the extent of the impact on educators at the selected school and in so doing explore ways in which it can enhance the positive and minimise the negative. It will explore what support structures need to be in place to assist educators in their efforts to facilitate change.

Some researchers (Ladbrook, 2009; Nel et al., 2011) have established that educators perceive the lack of certain resources as preventing them from functioning more effectively. The school in this study already had some of those resources, such as comparatively smaller classes (average class size of 35); access to moderate financial and material resources; educator engagement with in-service training and many of them pursuing further studies to improve their qualifications. It appears, however, that access to resources has not diminished the emotional and cognitive strain of adapting to the changes experienced by the educators. Consideration of the abovementioned emotional impact of change (Evans, 1996; Fullan, 2001) may present a more plausible explanation.

## **1.7 RESEARCH DESIGN**

The study was undertaken with educators at the primary full service school selected for this study, in the Johannesburg West District of the Gauteng Department of Education (GDE). The findings are for the specific use of the school staff, management, SGB and any other stakeholders who may have an interest in the school. The research paradigm is qualitative and interpretivist, with the design drawing on elements of phenomenological research, interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) and certainly case studies, given that only the educators of a single school will form the population.

### **1.7.1 Research paradigm**

The qualitative aspect of the research, as Merriam (2002:5) suggests, will be a product which is richly descriptive, with “Words and pictures rather than numbers ... used to convey what the researcher has learned about a phenomenon”, in this case the experience of change and transformation. Terre Blanche, Durrheim and Painter (2006:273) describe the interpretive paradigm, sometimes referred to as the phenomenological paradigm, as one that “involves taking people’s subjective experiences seriously as the essence of what is real for them”.

To Merriam (2009:26), phenomenological research “is well suited for studying affective, emotional, and often intense human experiences [and] researchers conducting a basic interpretive study would be interested in:

- how people interpret their experiences
- how they construct their worlds
- what meaning they attribute to their experiences.”

Smith and Eatough (2012:44) regard the central concern of IPA as the “analysis of how individuals make sense of their lived experiences”, based on the idea that people are ‘self-interpreting beings’ and actively engaged in interpreting the events, objects and people in their lives, in an activity known as ‘sense-making’. This research method is favoured because the ultimate aim of the research is to give voice to the essence of educators’ experiences. The research design supports the

aims of the research in that the researcher sought to capture the educators' experiences of the phenomena of change and transformation.

### **1.7.2 Data collection**

In keeping with the qualitative paradigm, interviews and focus groups were conducted with the teaching personnel, some of whom were also invited to write personal accounts of their experiences.

#### **1.7.2.1 Sampling**

Subjects for the interviews, focus groups and narrative accounts were selected purposefully across grades, post levels, gender and race to account as far as possible for all activities and functions of the school. Patton (1990:169) suggests that, "the logic and power of purposeful sampling lies in selecting *information-rich* cases for in-depth study. These are cases from which one can learn much about issues of central importance to the purpose of the research." This sample of educators is, simultaneously, a convenience sample, defined by McMillan and Schumacher (2010:175) as, "a group of subjects selected on the basis of being accessible or expedient". The researcher was a member of staff at the school and it was therefore convenient to use this sample of educators.

#### **1.7.2.2 Interviews**

According to Gillham (2000:1), an interview is a conversation, usually between two people, in which one person, the interviewer, is seeking responses for a particular purpose from the other person, the interviewee. Interviews, particularly, semi-structured, were used to obtain in-depth information from all participants. Among the most widely used and basic instruments for collecting qualitative data (Ary, Jacobs, Sorenson, 2010:438), they enable participants to share their thoughts, feelings and experiences in their own words and by means of that interaction the researcher is able to invite elaboration, probe and delve into the essence of their experiences and perspectives.

Interviews were recorded using a digital recorder and transcribed. The semi-structured nature of the interviews contributed to exploring the issues reflected in the research aims and to finding out how the selected interviewees felt about or experienced the research phenomenon. The researcher, therefore, endeavoured to create an environment of openness and trust within which each interviewee was able to express him/herself authentically (Terre Blanche et al., 2006:297).

The following steps, as proposed by Terre Blanche et al. (2006:322), were followed to analyse all the collected data:

**Step1: Familiarisation and immersion** - the process of reading through the data to deepen understanding of the interpretation likely to occur.

**Step 2: Inducing themes** - the inference of general rules or organising principles that underlie the material, preferably based on the language and ideas of participants.

**Step 3: Coding** - breaking up the data into one or more themes.

**Step 4: Elaboration** - the process of carefully comparing sections of text that appear to belong together and possibly to revise the initial coding system to capture themes more elaborately.

**Step 5: Interpretation and checking** - compiling the gathered information for interpretation and checking that appropriate and justified interpretations have been made.

These steps will be explained in greater detail in Chapter 3.

### **1.7.2.3 Focus groups**

A research interview conducted with a group of people, usually between 6 and 12, is generally referred to as a focus group (Terre Blanche et al., 2006:304). For Ary, Jacobs and Sorenson (2010:439) the interaction within the group is equally valuable to individual responses in that they bring into contact different perspectives. The focus group makes more economical use of time and is more socially oriented (Ary et al., 2010:439). While individual interviews help in understanding a respondent's subjective experience, focus groups, by contrast, present their inter-subjective experience, i.e., experience shared by a community of people (Terre Blanche et al.,

2006:304). In this case, differences in the way people may experience the same event or change could be researched.

A semi-structured interview schedule was used to guide the discussion within the focus group. This gave the group an opportunity to talk about what is most pressing for them by allowing a degree of meandering discussion (Terre Blanche et al., 2006:305). All such interviews and discussions were recorded and transcribed verbatim. Brief notes were also taken when necessary to comment on observations made or dynamics that might not have been picked up in recordings.

The same steps as described previously were used, with organisation and interpretation of data taking place on the three levels of text, content and discourse, integrated in the steps as proposed by Terre Blanche, Durrheim and Painter (2006). These are explored in greater detail in Chapter 3.

#### **1.7.2.4 Narrative accounts**

A narrative account is a self-recording data collection instrument derived from the genre of self-reporting methods, such as interviews and questionnaires (Breakwell, 2012:393). Instead of expressing their thoughts, feelings and experiences verbally, participants do so in writing, perhaps owing to lack of time to attend interviews or because of a wish to reflect on and respond to a set of prompts in their own time, without the possible pressure of a face-to-face interview (Simons, 2009:49). This applied particularly to participants who were identified as having valuable contributions to make and who were keen to participate. They were given a narrative account brief and invited to write their responses to the prompts and ideas, based on the questions in the semi-structured interview schedule for the individual interviews and focus group discussions. Participants could write their accounts in whichever format they chose, in their own space and time, and submit these for data collection.

The data collected from the narrative accounts was analysed consistently with the previously described data collection tools, in line with the five steps proposed by Terre Blanche, Durrheim and Painter (2006:322). According to Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011), narrative texts can also be used to analyse discourses, defined as the meaning given to texts, which create and shape knowledge and behaviours and the exercise of power. A discourse may be described as a way of thinking, perhaps



culturally or institutionally conditioned, which is legitimised by communities, often those with power and this can be deployed through the use of language to reveal such patterns of thinking and meanings. Any text, therefore, can contain and reveal several discourses, and can be deconstructed for several meanings.

## **1.8 TRUSTWORTHINESS**

Research generally has to meet the requirements of reliability and validity. The former refers to the degree to which research results can be repeated (Terre Blanche, Durrheim & Painter, 2006:92). Whilst the results of this study cannot be repeated in the exact context, with the same people in the exact environment on a specific day, as Terre Blanche et al. (2006:93) contend:

Interpretive and constructivist researchers do not assume that they are investigating a stable and unchanging reality and therefore, do not expect to find the same results repeatedly. On the contrary, they expect that individuals, groups, and organisations will behave differently and express different opinions in changing contexts.

This study therefore, had to prove its dependability rather than its reliability. According to Terre Blanche et al. (2006:93), dependability refers to the degree to which the reader can be convinced that the findings did indeed occur as the researcher claims they did. This is achieved through rich and detailed descriptions that show how certain actions and opinions are rooted in and develop out of contextual interaction.

Validity refers to the “degree to which a measuring instrument measures what it is supposed to measure” (Du Plooy, 2004:193). As a qualitative study, this research needs to prove credibility, instead of internal validity (or ‘truth value’ and authenticity) and transferability instead of external validity (the extent to which outcomes the study can be transferred, or generalised to other contexts), as suggested by Miles and Huberman (1994:278, 279). This is explained in greater detail in chapter 3.

## **1.9 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

This research has been brought before the University Ethics Committee for approval, with permission sought from the GDE, the district director, the school principal and SGB chairperson. Approval was granted in all cases. All educators who participated in the research gave their informed consent, signing consent forms designed to protect their identity as far as possible. Consent was also sought from participants being interviewed as well as for the recording of all interviews and discussions. Philosophical principles guiding research, as outlined by Terre Blanche et al. (2006:67) were upheld throughout the research, notably autonomy and respect for the dignity of persons, non-maleficence, beneficence and justice. The ethical considerations are described in greater detail in Chapter 3.

## **1.10 RESEARCH PROGRAMME**

The research programme is structured in the following way:

Chapter 1: Introduction of the topic, presenting the background to and awareness of the study, a brief study of the literature, statement of the problem, aims of the research, the research design, the research programme and summary.

Chapter 2: Review and explanation of the available literature, particularly with regard to changes in South Africa with regard to transformation in education, curriculum change, inclusion, the types of schools designated by White Paper 6, the effects of changes in management and governance on an institution and the impact that all these may have on educators in a school. Kurt Lewin's three-phase model of change, as well as his group dynamic theory and related information forms the theoretical framework for the study.

Chapter 3: The research design and details of the research methodology.

Chapter 4: Analysis, presentation and discussion of the results of the data collected.

Chapter 5: A summary of the findings and the subsequent recommendations that accompany them, describing the limitations of the study and suggesting possible areas for future, related research.

## **1.11 SUMMARY**

This chapter introduced the topic of research into how educators at a full service primary school were experiencing transformation and occupational related change. The study has been contextualised by way of background, awareness of the problem and motivation for the study. In order to determine its scope and to explore existing research in the field, a preliminary review of the literature consulted was made. The research question was posed, with sub-questions relating to it, subsequently translating into the aims of the research. The research design selected to be coherent with the aims was then presented, including reference to sampling procedures, data collection tools and methods of data analysis. Issues of trustworthiness and ethical considerations in the execution of the study were outlined, as a preamble to further discussion in Chapter 3.

The theoretical framework of the study and an elaboration of the literature reviewed in anticipation of and throughout this study will be presented in Chapter 2.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

According to Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011:121), a literature study acts as a springboard to the envisioned study, defining the field, what needs to be addressed in it, why and how it relates to or extends existing research in the field. Menter, Elliot, Hulme, Lewin and Lowden (2011:85) describe it as a story of what is already known, its significance, what is yet to be discovered and why; that is, the background to the research. Both apply to this study, which includes a narrative review that tells the story of changes in South African education to date. It also presents a theoretical framework which underpins the exploration undertaken. Three particular groups of information are reviewed and discussed:

1. An overview of Kurt Lewin's three phase model of change, which is the first part of the theoretical framework underpinning this study and the second part of the theoretical framework, namely Kurt Lewin's Group Dynamic Theory. These theoretical concepts are split because the first part has relevance with regard to the changes in the South African education system after 1994; the second for the educators at the school being studied, as a group, and aspects to consider for enabling educators to cope more effectively with the changes.
2. Changes in South Africa with regard to transformation in education, curriculum change, new approaches to assessment, managing diversity with regard to the inclusion of learners who experience barriers to learning, different types of schools as envisioned by White Paper 6 (2001); language, religious and cultural diversity.
3. Educators as change agents and their expected roles and the possible impact of change in general.

The chapter explores both the discourses and the processes around the changes in the South African education system and their potential impact on educators as agents of them.

## **2.2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF CHANGE (1)**

When changes occur, be they organisational, technical, political, or systemic, it is usually for the sake of improving what exists. The expectation therefore, particularly in the case of policy changes, is that such changes should be implemented effectively. Various models of organisational change have been developed, both to explain the process of change and to guide it. The following is one of several models, chosen for its simplicity of meaning and as a source of reference, as the process of change in the South African education system is explored.

### **2.2.1 Kurt Lewin's Three Phase Model of Change**

The theoretical framework which underpins this study is from a historical source, which the researcher considers to be as relevant to a modern society as it was 65 years ago. Kurt Lewin (1952), a Gestalt psychologist, proposed the idea that change can be viewed as a three-step process, as follows (Cameron & Green, 2012; Newstrom & Davis, 1997):

Unfreezing      →    Changing      →      Refreezing

#### **Step 1: Unfreezing**

Old ideas and practices need to be cast aside so that new ones can be learnt, often as difficult as learning the new ones. It is an easy step to overlook while concentrating on the proposed change itself, but failure to cast aside old ideas often leads to resistance to change. In the context of the changes in the education system, of relevance is the way in which educators were prepared for the changes, such as that from Christian National Education (CNE) to Outcomes Based Education (OBE). Training around the new education system was focused on getting educators to make a 'paradigm shift' because there were differences between the two approaches. Dada, Dipholo, Hoadley, Khembo, Muller and Volmink (2009) write that "Apartheid had emphasised rote learning, authoritarian teaching practices (enforced through corporal punishment) and behavioural pedagogy, leaving most of the profession unprepared for the constructivist teaching approaches of the new

curriculum” (Report of the Task Team for the Review of the Implementation of the National Curriculum Statement, 2009).

### **Step 2: Changing**

New ideas and practices are learnt during this step, which involves helping a person think, reason and perform in new ways. It can be a time of confusion, disorientation, overload and despair. The changing step, is usually also mixed with elements of hope, discovery and excitement. Training of educators, the researcher included, in many instances, was conducted over two days, during which time an overwhelming amount of information was disseminated. It was difficult to relinquish old practices, and making a ‘paradigm shift’ was more problematic than expected. Educator training for subsequent curriculum changes varied between three and five days, and it was the experience of the researcher that much of the information was covered superficially, in the hope that educators would become familiar with the curriculum through practice and further support and training at district level. According to Coolahan, Corradini, Crighton, Ebersold, Kelly, Monard, Mario and Whitman (2008:295) the “cascade model” of in-service education, which involves instruction and curriculum training cascading down from national to provincial level, proved inadequate and reached the schools in a much diluted form (Review of National Policies for Education South Africa, OECD review committee, 2008). Provinces had the option to outsource the training to tertiary institution staff or service providers, or they would train district officials to provide training or train educators to train their peers.

### **Step 3: Refreezing**

The new information that has been learnt is now integrated into actual practice. In addition to being intellectually accepted, the new practices become emotionally embraced and incorporated in the person’s routine behaviour. Merely knowing a new procedure is not enough to ensure its use. Successful on-the-job practice must be the ultimate goal of the refreezing step (Cameron & Green, 2012). Of concern to the researcher, regarding this step, is the relatively short time educators had in which to ‘refreeze’ and integrate all the new information before the next curriculum revision

was upon them. The cycle of curriculum revision and adapting to a new one has been repeated five times in the last 20 years, begging the question as to whether educators have had enough time between changes to internalise and consolidate information that is critical to how confident and knowledgeable they feel in the practice of their profession and in adequate curriculum delivery.

The educators at the school at which this research was conducted, similarly to those at many other schools, have experienced continuous change in education in the last 20 years, including curriculum changes; a policy of inclusion after the polarity and exclusion of apartheid; desegregation of schools requiring a deeper understanding and acceptance of the diversity of the nation; decentralisation of power to provinces and districts; transition from mainstream to full-service schooling; changes in management; societal transformation; and a new generation of learners, whose rights are paramount. The literature reviewed, pertaining to these issues, is presented in the following subsections, beginning with an overview of the most salient changes.

## **2.3 CHANGES IN THE SOUTH AFRICAN EDUCATION SYSTEM**

Since 1994 the South African context has been characterised by change, specifically with regard to education. During the previous dispensation education was the vehicle by means of which inequality, segregation and government control could be perpetuated. The democratisation of South Africa demanded a new education system that was desegregated, accessible to all, based on democratic principles and that redressed past inequalities (Lemmer, 2002:23). As Moyo (2009:18) acknowledges, equity, redress, access and quality are the discourses that have characterised an agenda for educational change and transformation in post-apartheid South Africa, whilst Harley and Wedekind (2004:195) describe curriculum reform in South Africa as being “of a scale arguably unparalleled in the history of curriculum change”.

### **2.3.1 Transformation in education**

Words synonymous with 'transformation' include 'alteration', 'change', 'conversion', 'revolution', 'renovation', and 'makeover' (*Collins Thesaurus*, 2003), and all apply to the context of transformation in education in South Africa. In the face of political change the process of democratisation and socio-political redress of inequality would be unsuccessful without a complete overhaul of the education system that helped to entrench the policies of the apartheid regime.

The South African Qualifications Authority Act (1995) made provision for a National Qualifications Framework (NQF), introduced as an overarching structure that brought together schooling, industrial training and higher education in a single qualifications framework (Department of Education, 2000:9). However, the NQF was criticised for being "a major educational experiment that ultimately had more impact on discourse than on practice of education and training" (Chisholm, 2007:298).

Politically, transformation in education was both desirable and necessary, but changes were based less on academic revision than on global and economic influence to align education with industry and economic skills and competencies. Hoadley in Pinar (2010:137) describes it as follows:

The NQF ... was an attempt to create equivalencies in and between education and workplace learning. The strong influence of labour and an economic discourse is evident and there is general agreement in the literature that the construction of Curriculum 2005 was largely a product of labour's needs and their demands for a skill-based curriculum linked to an NQF.

According to Ramdass (2009), the

...changes that occurred included a unified, national education system, a more democratic system of school governance, new standards and qualifications authority, redistribution of financial and human resources, higher education reforms and the re-orientation to outcomes-based education.

A total of 18 education departments that were racially divided have been restructured into nine provincial education departments, with control decentralised within the ambit of a national education department. Inherent in this change was the repeal of previous education acts and the promulgation of new legislation, such as the South African Schools Act (SASA, 1996). Table 2.1 (below) traces a 20-year timeline and



summary of the policies and laws that systematically enabled and legitimised transformation in the education system, as well as significant milestones and events in the process of curriculum change in South Africa. The events on this timeline bear testimony to relentless activity in the education system, which has had to be absorbed, integrated and implemented by educators.

**Table 2.1:** Laws, policies and significant events that transformed the education system following the new political dispensation.

*(Information compiled from a variety of sources, all acknowledged in the bibliography)*

2013	CAPS implementation Grades 4, 5 and 6 and progressively into Senior Phase	
2012	Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements (CAPS) implementation in Grades 1, 2, 3 and 10	
2011	Three day training for Foundation Phase educators on the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements (CAPS) Department of Education (DoE) becomes Department of Basic Education (DBE)	
2010		
2009	Review Committee on the Revised National Curriculum Statements <i>Minister of Education declares 'death' of OBE</i>	
2008	Implementation of 'Foundations for Learning' <i>International committee for Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) review the national policies for education in South Africa</i>	
2007	Further Education and Training Colleges Act <i>Umalusi Director slams OBE</i>	Foundations for Learning Campaign
2006		
2005	<i>Report on Educator Workload in South Africa for the Education Labour Relations Council</i>	
2004	National Curriculum Statements (NCS) – revision of curriculum, implementation Foundation Phase and progressively throughout all grades. <i>The end of Curriculum 2005</i>	
2003		
2002	Review Committee on Curriculum 2005 Education Laws Amendment Act	
2001	Education White Paper 6 on Special Needs Education General and Further Education and Training Quality Assurance Act	
2000	Adult Basic Education and Training Act no 52 South African Council of Educators Act	
1999		
1998	Further Education and Training Act Employment of Educators Act Skills Development Act	

1997	Higher Education Act - Teacher Training Colleges merged with universities or shut down, reducing number of institutions producing teachers <i>Launch of Curriculum 2005</i> <i>Jansen predicts failure of OBE</i>	
1996	Constitution of the Republic of South Africa Act No 108 of 1996 The South African Schools Act (SASA) National Education Policy Act (NEPA) <i>Introduction of Outcomes Based Education (OBE)</i>	
1995	South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) Act Introduction of Interim Syllabuses /Syllabi in school – racial, biased, irrelevant content removed White paper on Education and Training – <i>new discourse: Outcomes Based Education (OBE)</i>	
1994	First democratic elections. ANC becomes South Africa's first democratically elected ruling party and government.	
1993	Constitution of the Republic of South Africa Act No 200 of 1993 - Interim Constitution providing for a sovereign and democratic constitutional state based on equality between all persons and citizens are guaranteed the protection of their fundamental rights in terms of a Bill of Rights (Lemmer, 2002:28)	
1948	Christian National Education	18 Education Departments

### 2.3.2 Curriculum change

The process of curriculum change in South Africa since its first democratic elections is best viewed chronologically, but whilst the current curriculum debate in South Africa is a long and interesting one it is beyond the scope of this discussion. Relevant here, rather, is a brief analysis of the process of curriculum change and matters pertaining to the agents of those changes at the level of the classroom, namely, the educators.

After 1990, political change in South Africa was swift (Le Grange, 2010), and when imminent, committees were already working on the changes that would be required in education to reflect the new dispensation and purge the curriculum of its apartheid flavours and discrimination (Jansen, 1999:145). International influences were strong, particularly from Australia and New Zealand, which were also experimenting with a new curriculum, and the United States of America (USA) home of William Spady, founder of OBE. Equally strong were the influences of labour, as mentioned above.

According to Dada et al. (2009:11), the new national curriculum that coincided with the birth of a new democracy had to play a multitude of roles in response to the nation's needs, and had to achieve the following:

- Promote the new constitution
- Rebuild a divided nation
- Establish and promote a sense of national identity in general, but particularly for a troubled education sector (17, largely race-based, education departments with several different curricula)
- Be inclusive in the broad and narrow sense of the term
- Offer equal education opportunity for all
- Inspire a constituency that had been oppressed by the previous education dispensations and policies
- Establish socially valued knowledge to be transmitted to the following generations.

Dada et al. (2009:11) further contend that “The response to the above set of criteria was the enthusiastically, if hastily, developed Curriculum 2005, an outcomes based curriculum for the General Education and Training band.”

In 1994, Interim Syllabuses, under the banner of ‘People’s education’, were immediately brought into operation. Education departments were merged and schooling was viewed as a fundamental right of all children in South Africa, in line with the human rights discourse and entrenched in the Constitution (1996: Section 29 (1). OBE was sold as a panacea to South Africa’s education dilemma, and from the outset educators were invited to embrace new philosophies, make paradigm shifts and implement the new curriculum with gusto. However, this was done with no clear direction, insufficient training and a myriad of policies and guidelines, giving carte blanche to teachers with regard to curriculum content.

Coolahan, Corradini, Crighton, Ebersold, Kelly, Monard, Mario and Whitman (2008:80) described the new curriculum as “a novel system for all educators, black or white and no matter where they had been trained”. Coolahan, et al. Further acknowledge that “much research has indicated how difficult and complex it is to achieve major educational change, even in countries where the circumstances are more favourable than they were in South Africa.” (OECD report, 2008:127)

1997 heralded the launch of Curriculum 2005 (C2005), which for many was synonymous with OBE, even though OBE was but the guiding principle on which

(C2005) was structured. Dada et al. (2009:12) comment on the response to OBE as follows:

The marketing of Curriculum 2005, the timing and the compelling story it told, ensured its acceptance and primacy within a very short space of time. The key and clear messaging included a positive new beginning, the move away from Christian National Education and its attendant philosophy of Fundamental Pedagogics, to a new emphasis on rights-based education and the notion of learner centeredness. Quite simply, the nation, particularly teachers and the media, embraced the story it told and the ideological turn it promised.

Pretorius (2002) described the introduction of OBE as a very contentious issue in South Africa, and one that elicited fierce debate among the public and academics alike. According to Pretorius (2002), the approach was regarded by many educationalists in the country as revolutionary and new, as it entailed a radically new terminology and range of concepts (more than 100). It was argued that hundreds of un- and under-qualified teachers within the unique circumstances of South Africa would not be able to make a success of the new style of teaching and learning.

As early as 1997, Jansen (1998:3-9) perceived OBE to be an “ambitious” choice of curriculum for a fledgling democracy and predicted its failure based on the ten reasons summarised by the researcher, below:

1. The language of OBE was too complex, confusing and contradictory.
2. OBE as curriculum policy made problematic claims and assumptions about the relationship between curriculum and society, for example in its suggestion that it could provide a solution to the country’s economic problems. The changing demands on educators in OBE were worrying, since the role and relationship between teacher and learner would change as teachers shifted from their role as an authority in the classroom, in terms of both content and function, to a facilitator or learning mediator.
3. The idealism and optimism surrounding OBE was based on flawed assumptions about what really happens in schools, how classrooms are organised, and what kind of teachers exist within the system.
4. A philosophical contradiction was inherent in OBE, as it expected teachers and learners to “use knowledge creatively only to inform them that the

desired outcomes are already specified” (Jansen, 1998:6). This specifying of outcomes in advance could be seen as rather anti-democratic.

5. The political and epistemological implications of a curriculum that focuses on ‘outcomes’ as opposed to ‘process’ was difficult to fathom, “when much of the educational and political struggle of the 1980’s valued the processes of learning and teaching as ends in themselves” (Jansen, 1998:6). This approach inhibited teachers’ full and active engagement with and participation around this important policy, limiting input to a few elite teachers.
6. The diminished presence of values in the curriculum as the focus on instrumentalism (what a student can demonstrate given a set of outcomes), increased. The degree to which important values can be transmitted through curriculum had been curtailed by both its apparent absence in the curriculum as well as the content having been largely undefined and unspecified. This “latitude of interpretation” that characterised OBE could mean, for example, that “good citizenship” can be perceived differently by teachers and learners in different contexts.
7. The administrative burden placed on teachers would multiply in their attempt to manage OBE. Assessment practices, for example, would require that teachers “reorganise the curriculum, increase the amount of time allocated to monitoring individual student progress against outcomes, administer appropriate forms of assessment and maintain comprehensive records.”
8. OBE trivialised curriculum content, critical for giving meaning to a particular set of outcomes. Curriculum content needed to be chosen carefully, especially in the South African context where content could easily swing from propagating one extreme position to another. Secondly, the cross-curricular and inter-disciplinary demands encountered in learning complex tasks had not been considered in the implementation of OBE as it seemed to assume that learning takes place in a linear way.
9. The success of OBE was dependent on the re-engineering of every facet of an education system from “trained and retrained teachers, radically new forms of assessment, classroom organisation which facilitates monitoring and assessment, additional time for managing this complex process, retrained principals to secure implementation as required, parental support and involvement, new forms of learning resources which are consonant with an

outcomes based orientation and opportunity for teacher dialogue and exchange as teachers co-learn in the process of implementation. There is neither the fiscal base nor the political will to intervene in the education system at this level of intensity.” (Jansen, 1998:8)

10. OBE required a radical revision of the system of assessment, which had not been sufficiently debated and considered in the hurried discussions in the Learning Area Committees.

Jansen (1999:147) further considered OBE to be driven by political imperatives which had little to do with the realities of classroom life.

Spady visited South Africa twice (Jansen, 1999), first to explain and sell the concept of OBE, second to declare that there was no evidence that OBE could work because it had not been successful in other places in which it had been implemented. In that same year, 1997, with much pomp and ceremony, Curriculum 2005 (C2005) had been launched, but by early 2000, inherent flaws were becoming obvious, with specific complaints about children's inability to read, write and count at the appropriate grade levels, their lack of general knowledge and the shift away from explicit teaching and learning to facilitation and group work. Teachers did not know what to teach, whilst academics and the media called for a review of the curriculum (Review Committee, 2009). In 2002 a Review Committee was appointed, and based on their report the National Curriculum Statement (NCS) was introduced for implementation in 2004.

Hoadley, in Yates and Grumet (2011:143) describe changes to the curriculum as follows:

While the political project of the new curriculum was very clear, its pedagogical shortcomings soon became evident. Within a short time this new curriculum was revised. And once again, within a relatively short period of time after the implementation of the revised curriculum, the national curriculum was once again reviewed.

Le Grange (2010: 192) comments on the detailed and sophisticated critiques of OBE, and that despite revisions the state pressed on with its OBE agenda for almost a decade:

...more recently there has been a turn of events whereby the Director of a statutory body, Umalusi, has delivered devastating critiques of OBE in both an academic article and in the popular media – possibly signalling the end of the OBE chapter in South Africa

The comment was made following the presentation in 2007 of a paper by the Director of Umalusi, (Allais and Taylor, 2007) entitled, “A Nation in Denial.” Outcomes Based Education was clearly losing popularity as the solution to educational, economic and social dilemmas. In May 2009, the Minister of Education, Angie Motshekga declared, “We have signed the death certificate of OBE.”

Of interest to the researcher is the degree to which educators had clarity on their function and practice at this point. Dada et al. (2009:7) gave the following comment on the situation at that time:

There is a plethora of policies, guidelines and interpretations of policies and guidelines at all levels of the education system, from the DoE down to provincial, district and Subject Advisor level. Exacerbating the situation is the reality that many teachers, as well as some DoE and PDE [Provincial Departments of Education] staff, have not made the shift from C2005 to the revised National Curriculum Statement. This has resulted in widespread confusion about the status of curriculum and assessment policies.

### **2.3.3 A new approach to assessment**

According to Pretorius, in van Wyk and Lemmer (2002), “Assessment is one of the most important activities an educator using an outcomes based approach needs to master. In outcomes based education assessment is ongoing and continuous and thus forms an integral part of all teaching and learning activities.” The view of Dada et al. (2009:8) in the report of the Revised National Curriculum Statement Review Committee is that assessment has been a challenge for teachers since C2005, when an unnecessarily complicated approach to assessment was introduced. Further complicating the situation in the GET phase, a new assessment policy was not developed to support the National Curriculum Statement. As a result, teachers and parents were confused about several aspects of assessment, from progression requirements to performance descriptors.

With regard to the concurrent changes in assessment and implementation of the Revised National Curriculum Statement, Dada et al. (2009:14) found that:

Assessment support was not detailed enough and no assessment policy was developed by the specialists who had written the curriculum. Initially teachers were told to continue using the Assessment policy for Curriculum 2005, but over time incremental changes were made to this policy creating widespread confusion with regard to assessment practices.

This situation is further complicated by the decentralisation of power to provincial departments of education and their many districts, in that different ones have tried to clarify or supplement national policies with their own guidelines and directives', thus adding to the confusion of what constitutes policy and what does not.

The most recent curriculum revision, Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements (CAPS) makes specific provision for a set number of assessment tasks per subject per term, and the number of assessment tasks has increased, contrary to the recommendation of the OECD review committee (2008). The DoE's response to the low performance by South African children on international tests was to "increase the frequency of tests and other forms of assessment, in accordance with the adage that, in education, "you get what you test". They caution that "Merely increasing frequency of testing will not raise achievement: learning will." (OECD Report, 2008:189, 211).

## **2.4 COPING WITH DIVERSITY**

Globally, the human rights discourse, particularly with regard to people who experience marginalisation and exclusion, was gaining prominence following the adoption of The World Declaration on Education for All in Jomtein, in 1990, (UNESCO 2009:7). Burnett (2009:4) describes inclusive education as:

a process that involves the transformation of schools and other centres of learning to cater for all children – including boys and girls, students from ethnic and linguistic minorities, rural populations, those affected by HIV and AIDS, and those with disabilities and difficulties in learning and to provide learning opportunities for all youth and adults as well.



Van Wyk and Lemmer (2002) describe changes in the South African education system as, “restructuring the previous racially based and fragmented system into a single, non-discriminatory system of education which provides equal opportunities for all learners in the country”.

In the South African context, desegregation of schools has facilitated the inclusion of all learners from diverse cultures, language groups, races and religions, as well as those who experience a wide range of barriers to learning. With regard to the successful management of this diversity, Meier in Van Wyk and Lemmer (2002:153) suggests that, “As school populations become increasingly diverse, pressure is being put on educators to find new approaches to education that will meet the needs of all learners and represent a definite break from past segregationist approaches”.

#### **2.4.1 Diversity with regard to the inclusion of learners who experience barriers to learning**

The Salamanca Conference in Spain in 1994 focused global attention on the rights and plight of people with special needs in education (UNESCO, 2009). As a signatory to the Salamanca Statement, the South African government committed itself to placing Special Needs in Education on its agenda for change. In October 1996, the Ministry of Education appointed a National Commission on Special Needs in Education and Training and National Committee on Education Support Services, with the task of investigating and making recommendations on all aspects of ‘special needs and support services’ in education and training in South Africa (Department of Education, 2001). Their report and recommendations evolved into Education White Paper 6 on Special Needs Education.

The UNESCO Policy Guideline on Inclusion (2009: 14) advises that:

The success of creating inclusive education as a key to establishing inclusive societies depends on agreement among all relevant partners on a common vision supported by specific steps to be taken to put this vision into practice.

Further to that the guideline suggests requirements and expectations of teachers with regard to the successful practice and implementation of inclusion, including the following:

- To ensure that each learner understands the instructions and expected working modalities.
- To understand the learners' reaction to what is being taught
- To discuss learning and teaching as well as methods and possibilities for development
- To have positive attitudes to inclusion
- To be familiarised with new curricula and be trained in addressing student performance
- To develop learner-centred teaching methods and appropriate learning materials
- To create an optimum learning environment so that all children can learn well and achieve their potential
- To be educated in alignment with these expectations.

It appears that educators are ultimately responsible for the successful implementation of inclusion, confirmed by the view that "The way teachers teach is of critical importance in any reform designed to improve inclusion." (UNESCO, 2009)

Closer to home the inclusion debate remains unresolved as a combination of factors in the South African context impact on the successful inclusion of learners who have special education needs. In recent research Pillay and Di Terlizzi (2009) found that a learner with learning difficulties benefited from placement in a special needs environment that provided valuable and necessary resources to meet his learning needs in ways that could not be done in a mainstream classroom. He concedes that

...while inclusive education may be a way forward to access quality education for all, it can be argued that the current South African socio-economic environment does not necessarily allow for its successful implementation, as further access to resources and facilities need to be made available." (Pillay and Di Terlizzi, 2009:1).

#### **2.4.1.1      *Types of schools according to Education White Paper 6 on Special Needs in Education***

White Paper 6 (2001: 18-22) makes reference to three different types of schools as follows:

- Ordinary or mainstream schools which include all schools not otherwise specifically designated.
- Full service schools and colleges which will be equipped and supported to provide for the full range of learning needs among all learners and to address barriers to learning. Such schools would serve as models of inclusion that could later be considered for system-wide application because it would be too difficult to transform, equip and support all schools in the medium term.
- Special schools that will accommodate learners who need high levels of support. Such schools will also function as resource centres for other schools in the district support system.

#### **2.4.1.1.1 Full service schools**

The process for the creation of full-service schools was envisioned to be “within mainstream schooling, the designation and conversion of approximately 500, out of 20 000 primary schools to full-service schools, beginning with the 30 school districts that are part of the national District Development Programme.” (White Paper 6, DoE, 2001:22) The DoE would identify these schools and convert them to full-service. The researcher is concerned that while this ideal sounds simple it may be more complicated to convert the practices and attitudes of the human resources who have to enact it.

White paper 6 (DoE, 2001:22) promises that:

Full-service schools will be assisted to develop their capacity to provide for the full range of learning needs and to address barriers to learning. Special attention will be paid to developing flexibility in teaching practices and styles through training, capacity building and the provision of support to learners and educators in these schools. In full-service schools, priorities will include orientation to and training in new roles focusing on multi-level classroom instruction, co-operative learning, problem solving and the development of

learners' strengths and competencies rather than focusing on their shortcomings only.

This is certainly honourable intent, but the reality is reflected in the findings of the OECD Review Committee (2008: 127) that:

...vision, idealism and high-minded concern for a greatly reformed education system were very much in evidence among legislators and policy makers in the early years. However, it is also clear that there was an underestimation of the time, resources and qualitative teaching force required to make operational the policy aspirations in the schoolrooms throughout the country.” (OECD Report, 2008)

#### **2.4.2 Language diversity**

Section 29(2) of the Constitution states that “everyone has the right to receive education in the official language or languages of their choice in public educational institutions where that education is reasonably practicable.” At the school at which this study was conducted, competence in the Language of Learning and Teaching (LOLT) was not an admission requirement (School Admissions Policy, 2012), the implication being that a learner may, for example, be enrolled in Grade 5 for the first time, in an English class, but not have been taught in English. He or she would therefore not be sufficiently competent in the language to engage in the learning process effectively.

The language policy specified in the Revised National Curriculum Statement was that it is preferable for children to learn in their home language in the Foundation Phase but that the Language of Learning and Teaching (LOLT), which is English in most cases, should be offered as a subject from Grade 1, in order for learners to get a solid foundation in the LOLT. In 2009 the NCS Review Committee found that this language policy had been neither communicated nor implemented, resulting in many provinces across the country only starting to teach English in Grade 3, leaving children inadequately prepared for the change to English as the LOLT in Grade 4.

### **2.4.3 Religious and cultural diversity**

Commenting on the role of the Christian Church in colonial domination, Soudien (2010:223) asserts that while indigenous religions are recognised in post-apartheid South Africa, “they have little official currency.” He further suggests that religion has little “visibility” in the curriculum generally.

## **2.5 EDUCATORS AS AGENTS OF CHANGE**

Educators or teachers are central to the education system in that they integrate the plans and policies of the education department, implement them, co-ordinate and influence all aspects of curriculum delivery and learning.

### **2.5.1 Expected educator roles and workload**

The South African Norms and Standards for Educators (Department of Education, 2000) identifies seven key roles to be fulfilled by educators in their multi-dimensional role in the classroom. Donald, Lazarus and Lolwana (2006:151) describe these as follows:

An educator ought to be...

- a *learning mediator* – whose primary role it is to mediate the most effective learning in all his/her students.
- an *interpreter and designer of learning programmes* – to interpret and adapt relevant knowledge, information and skills to design appropriate learning programmes specific to the needs of his/her learners.
- a *leader, administrator and manager* – to provide goals, direction, structure and guidance for his/her students.
- a *scholar, researcher and lifelong learner* – in order to develop professionally, conduct research on a daily basis regarding teaching and learning processes and model the same to learners.

- an *assessor* – this is a critical aspect of an educator's role since appropriate assessment procedures relative to performance outcomes, need to be integrated into the whole learning and teaching process.
- a *community, citizenship and pastoral* support provider – addressing barriers to learning in the classroom and responding to specific learning needs.
- a *learning area / subject / discipline / phase specialist* – keeping up to date with developments in his field, improving and extending competency.

The demands on educators are high and the criticism equally so. Educators have had their share of scathing attacks, because ultimately, delivery, or non-delivery of a curriculum is the responsibility of those in the classroom. The OECD review committee (2008:23) assert that:

The “returns to investment” in teacher education, or the quality of performance one might expect from learners in return for money spent on educators, is very low [in South Africa].

To the extent that “low educator productivity” has been cited as the main reason for South Africa's relatively poor performance (Department of Education, 2003c:10).

The Department of Education (2006i:6) further made the statement that

Notwithstanding the improved qualification profile of the teaching force, the majority of educators are not yet sufficiently equipped to meet the needs of a 21<sup>st</sup> century environment and their poor conceptual and content knowledge is a direct contributor to low levels of learner achievement.

Jansen (1998:6) had, however, cautioned that:

...the sad reality is that the overwhelming majority of teachers simply do not have access to information on OBE or understand OBE in instances where such information may be available... there is not a process, systematic and on-going, in which teachers are allowed to conceptualise and make sense of OBE as curriculum policy. In a cruel twist of history, teachers continue to be defined as ‘implementers’ and even in this marginal role, official support is uneven, fragmented and, for many teachers, simply non-existent.

Chisholm, Hoadley, Kivulu, Brookes, Prinsloo, Kgobe, Mosia, Narsee and Rule (2005:184) reported that:

The evidence shows that the major casualty of policy overload and class size is the time that educators are able to devote to their core work, teaching. Only with great effort and at great personal cost are a small minority of educators able to meet all the requirements of them... schools most in need of improvement are least able to respond to new external requirements...

This team found that the very policies which attempt to guarantee that instruction and assessment will take place, serve to undermine instructional time. "This happens when teachers use class time to complete administrative tasks" (Educator Workload Report, 2005:xiii).

In reference to the reports of the many review committees, Jansen (1998:17) points out that "reports and reviews not only demonstrate the considerable distance between policy and practise with respect to OBE, they also lay bare some of the factors which explain such disarticulation between what bureaucrats intend and what teachers experience."

## **2.6 THE IMPACT OF CHANGE ON THE HUMAN RESOURCE**

Evans (1996: 21) asserts that "for those who implement change, its primary meanings encourage resistance while provoking loss, challenging competence, creating confusion and causing conflict". The possibility exists that educators, as implementers of changes in education, may feel resistant to the change, lament the loss of a system with which they were comfortable and confident, feel that their competence is challenged by the new system and subsequently experience confusion which may lead to conflict. Newstrom and Davis (1997:399) make a similar assertion that changes may lead to pressures and conflicts that eventually cause a breakdown somewhere in the organisation.

### **2.6.1 The anticipated impact of changes on educators**

Pinar (2010:7) makes the following analogy with regard to the position of teachers in certain areas: "...expecting underprepared and overworked teachers in poverty-stricken conditions to achieve pre-determined outcomes without detailed curriculum

content training amounted to leaving them in a “desert with only signposts for survival.”” The researcher believes that this applies even in conditions where teachers are better prepared and better resourced.

In reference to the introduction of OBE, Jansen (1998:7) writes of, “the sudden emergence of the proposal, bringing ordinary teachers into contact with a curriculum discourse completely foreign to their understanding and practices.” Hoadley (2011:154) posits that the shift from a ‘traditional’ to a more ‘constructivist’ pedagogy, in Curriculum 2005, alienated teachers from their own practice and that “the NCS did little to address this distancing of teachers from an understanding of the ideal practice proffered in policy.”

Pinar quotes Hugo (2010:7) as writing that:

Progressivism [in curriculum development] idealized the learner, idealized the teacher, idealized the classroom, set the whole vision up of creative paths discovered and scaffolded within different context getting to the same end point, obscuring the difficulty of the whole process, not recognizing that it was precisely middle-class kids with a strong family pedagogy who would swim in this world while poor kids coming from impoverished homes (material and pedagogic) would have no background from which to work this obscure world of hidden expectations.

Ramdass (2009) contends that:

Against this scenario of change, the South African education system still faces major challenges, with political instability at the forefront of education. This is especially true in terms of the tension between implementing changes that need both time and considerable resources to work their way through, and propinquity of issues that need to be addressed at the sites of implementation i.e. in the schools, universities, technikons, and particularly, in the lives of human personnel.

As mentioned previously in this chapter, Jansen (1998) raised concern about the effects of curriculum changes on educators, while Chisholm et al. (2005) investigated educator workload and found that too much of the time that educators spend at school is devoted to administrative tasks, rather than actual teaching.

In their report, the OECD team (2008:297) concurred that



If a conscientious teacher is faced with a set of objectives for which he/she does not have the capacity, nor is in a position to deliver, the result is likely to be feelings of guilt, inadequacy, low self-esteem, and alienation, or, at best “shallow coping” with the new requirements without any real engagement.

A common thread in the assertions of the aforementioned scholars and researchers is that both the anticipated and researched impact of changes on educators was an area of concern, since policy and practice were far removed and dissonant, creating challenges and conflicts for educators. In 2005, a study conducted by the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) for the Educator Labour Relations Council (ELRC) on *Potential Attrition in Education: The impact of job satisfaction, morale, workload and HIV/AIDS* found that 55% of teachers would resign from teaching if they could, as a result of workload stress, low salaries, lack of discipline in schools and lack of career advancement.

Ballantine and Hammack (2012:362) make the assertion that “changes introduced in educational systems affect structure and role relationships. When new ideas are introduced there are often efforts to incorporate them into the existing system” is a reflection of what happened in certain instances according to the findings of the Review Committee (2009) and resonates with the difficulties that may be encountered in Lewin’s three phase model of change. They found that the Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS) that was implemented in 2004 was not accompanied by a clear or detailed implementation plan, and no clear message or national communication plan regarding the benefits of the new curriculum, as had been the case with C2005. On the contrary, the message that supported the implementation of the RNCS was that it was NOT a new curriculum:

This opened the space for teachers and district, provincial and national Department of Education officials to blend the RNCS into Curriculum 2005. The Department of Education, provinces, districts and other stakeholders developed their own interpretations and supporting documentation for the Revised National Curriculum Statement, leading to widespread confusion about what constituted official policy. (Dada et al., 2009:13)

Another historical source, Benham (1977:205) declared:

Why did the reform fail? The reforms were often ‘installed’, that is, teachers were told to find ways of implementing change models. No wonder they couldn’t – or wouldn’t – do it: even if they understood what was wanted, chances are that they didn’t agree with much of it, and therefore would never feel genuine commitment to making it work.

This raises an interesting point with regard to the confidence educators have that the changes in education were indeed well considered, well structured and workable.

Soudien (2010:238) offers little consolation to educators in his view that current curriculum changes is “characterised by poor theory that is uncritically borrowed and poorly worked with”.

As Carl (2009:ix) deliberates the concept of an empowered educator; his admonishment is that “teachers dare not stand on the periphery and be onlookers or be mere passengers in regard to things which are done for them and decisions taken for them: they must be active participants in the process of relevant curriculum development.” He further contends that “it is particularly at the micro-level within the classroom that the teacher should show the greatest degree of involvement, i.e. in regard to subject curriculum development.”(2009: 217). He motivates educators to shift their own position from victims of an imperfect system, to empowered subject or curriculum specialists and active participants in the learning process.

## **2.7 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK (2)**

Educators in this school and as an entity are a group tasked with a very important mission, as described in 2.5.1. It seems appropriate, therefore, to explore a theoretical framework that considers factors that promote group cohesion and efficacy. Kurt Lewin “... a seminal theorist who deepened our understanding of groups, experiential learning and action research” (Smith, 2001), argued that people may come to a group with very different dispositions, but if they share a common objective, they are likely to act together to achieve it.

### **2.7.1 Kurt Lewin’s Group Dynamic Theory**

This is usually described as Lewin's field theory, from which, according to Brown (1998:28), two key ideas emerge. These are crucial to group process, namely interdependence of fate and task interdependence. Brown (1998) asserts that a group comes into being when the people in the group realise that their fate depends on that of the group as a whole, rather than the degree of similarity between them. This psychological construct is referred to as interdependence of fate.

Lewin (1946:165-6) described it thus, when discussing the position of Jews in 1939:

[I]t is not similarity or dissimilarity of individuals that constitutes a group, but rather interdependence of fate. Any normal group, and certainly any developed and organized one contains and should contain individuals of very different character...What is more, a person who has learned to see how much his own fate depends upon the fate of his entire group will be ready and even eager to take over a fair share of responsibility for its welfare.

According to Lewin, interdependence of fate can be a weak form of interdependence in many groups. A more significant factor is the second key idea. For Brown (1998:28) it is task interdependence, found in the goals of group members, whilst Smith (2001) describes it as follows: "if the group's task is such that members of the group are dependent on each other for achievement, then a powerful dynamic is created."

These implications can be positive or negative, as one person's success either directly facilitates others' success or is necessary for others to succeed also. In negative interdependence, known more usually as competition, one person's success is another's failure (Brown, 1989:30).

An intrinsic state of tension within group members stimulates or motivates movement toward the achievement of desired common goals (Johnson & Johnson 1995:175), whilst Smith (2001) suggests that the interdependence of both fate and task results in the group being a 'dynamic whole'. This means that a change in one member or subgroups impacts upon others. These two elements combined together to provide the basis for Deutch's (1949) deeply influential exploration of the relationship of task to process, and his finding that groups under conditions of positive interdependence were generally more cooperative. Members tended to participate and communicate more in discussion; were less aggressive; liked each other more; and tended to be

productive as compared to those working under negative task interdependence (Brown 1989:32; Johnson & Johnson 1995).

In the context of the educators at the school involved in this study, the researcher considers that as a group they have the potential to support, motivate and cooperate with each other to develop both personally and professionally. Lewin's ideas can be used as a guide for educators at the school as they aspire to improve their efficacy in managing the professional challenges they face, improving their practice and ultimately uplifting and developing the learners they teach. This may enable them to feel that they have greater control over their fate as well as to achieve their own professional goals, those of the institution and the broader goals of the community and country with regard to giving the children the best opportunity possible to acquire a good education, good citizenship and empowerment to achieve their own goals.

## **2.8 SUMMARY**

In this chapter some of the changes in education in South Africa have been examined closely and a model of change used as a framework within which to understand a process of change. Many ideas have been proffered around the challenges facing educators and their anticipated responses to change. Some reports of review committees have been introduced briefly. Global and national developments with regard to the inclusion of all learners have been discussed in relation to the impact on educator practices in classrooms. In line with this were the vision and plans contained in White Paper 6 for the designation and conversion of mainstream to full-service schools.

The question remains: How are the educators in this study experiencing these changes and what kind of support, if any, do they receive or require? In the following chapter the process of acquiring that information, empirically, will be described and the research methodology explained.

## **CHAPTER 3**

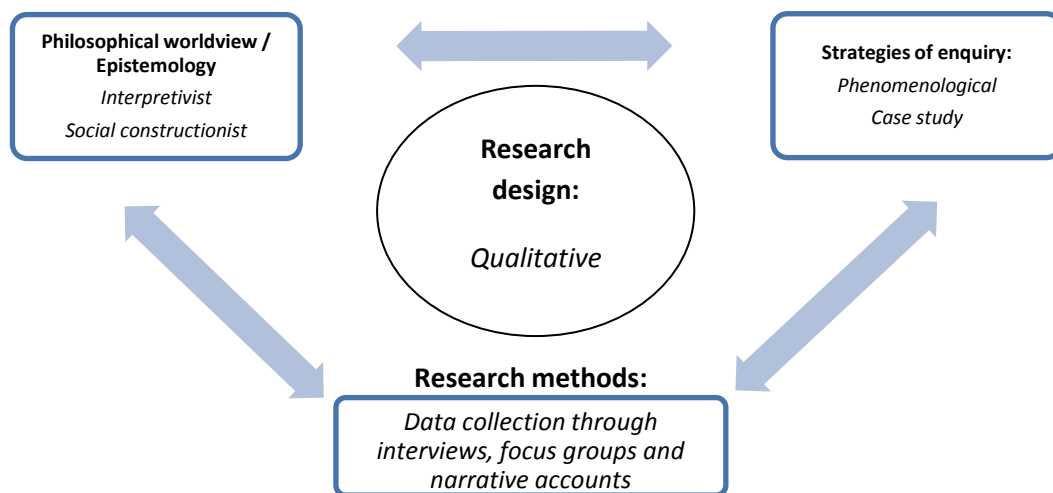
### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter offers a description of the plans and procedures for this research which aims to explore educators' experiences of transformation and change in a full service primary school. These span all decisions, from broad assumptions to detailed methods of data collection and analysis (Creswell, 2009). Initially, the research design is presented, followed by a description of the participants and sampling procedure. The data collection methods employed, namely interviews, focus groups and narrative accounts are then presented, including justification for their use. This is followed by a description of the process of data analysis, strategies to ensure trustworthiness, the ethical considerations and the role of the researcher in conducting this study.

#### **3.2 RESEARCH DESIGN**

Creswell (2009:5) conceptualises the research design as the “intersection of philosophical worldviews, strategies of inquiry related to those worldviews and the specific methods or research procedures that translate that approach into practice.” Terre Blanche, Durrheim and Painter (2006:34) aptly call it a “framework for action that serves as a bridge between research questions and the implementation or execution of the research”.



**Figure 3.1:** Diagrammatic representation of the research design of this study (adapted from Creswell’s framework for design, 2009:5).

The research design for this study is qualitative, which in the view of Bazeley (2013:4) involves a focus on “observing, describing, interpreting and analysing the way that people experience, act on or think about themselves and the world around them”. Creswell (2009:4) describes qualitative research as a means of “exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem”. In essence it appears that qualitative research seeks to describe and interpret people’s feelings and experiences in human terms rather than through the quantification and measurement approach of quantitative research (Terre Blanche et al., 2006:272). The process of qualitative research is largely inductive, with the researcher generating meaning from the data collected (Grotty, 1998).

The philosophical worldview that underpins this study is a ‘co-operation’ between interpretivist and social constructivist paradigms, two approaches often combined in qualitative research designs (Creswell, 2009:8). Some writers, such as Bloomberg and Volpe (2012:28) appear to describe these as one paradigm, whilst Terre Blanche et al., (2006:346) describe them separately. Interpretivist research seeks to empathically understand phenomena from within its context while social constructivism involves a more distanced, sceptical understanding (Terre Blanche, Durrheim & Painter, and 2006:346). Bloomberg and Volpe (2012:28) contend that the central assumption underpinning the social constructivist / interpretivist paradigm is that reality is socially constructed; individuals develop subjective meanings of their

personal experiences giving rise to multiple meanings or realities, which the researcher needs to understand from the perspective of the participants. Similarly, Creswell (2009:8) suggests that social constructivists “hold assumptions that individuals seek understanding of the world in which they live and work. These meanings are varied and multiple and the researcher, therefore, needs to look for the complexity of views rather than narrowing meanings into a few categories or ideas”. In the context of this study the researcher endeavours to explore the experiences of educators at the school being studied and, less directly, to get a sense of the prevalent discourses around transformation and change in the education system in which the educators work.

The strategy of enquiry guiding this study, as described in Chapter 1, combines elements of phenomenology, interpretive phenomenological analysis and case study. This is explained in more detail below.

Regarded by many to be the founder of phenomenology, Husserl was concerned with investigating how things appear directly, rather than through the media of cultural and symbolic structures, through questioning the common sense, ‘taken-for-granted’ assumptions of everyday life (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, and 2011:18). Cohen, et al. (2011) quote English and English (1958) as describing phenomenology as a theoretical point of view “that advocates the study of direct experience taken at face value; and one which sees behaviour as determined by the phenomena of experience rather than by external, objective and physically described reality”. According to Creswell (2009:231), phenomenological research is a qualitative strategy in which the researcher “identifies the essence of human experiences about a phenomenon as described by participants in a study.”

At the heart of interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) is the assumption that individuals are actively engaged in interpreting the events, objects and people in their lives in order to ‘make sense’ of it (Breakwell, Smith & Wright, 2012:441). Gobo (2011:16) defines a case study as research on a system bounded in space and time and embedded in a particular physical and socio-cultural context, using diverse methodologies, methods and data sources.

### **3.3 PARTICIPANTS AND SAMPLING**

Groenewald (2004:8) appropriately refers to sampling as the 'locating' of participants for a qualitative study, in this case purposefully selected on the basis that they would be representative or informative (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010:138) about their experiences of transformation and change in the education system in South Africa, and in their context, the transition from mainstream to full service school. Purposive sampling is described by Simons (2009:34) as being well suited to a phenomenological case study because the researcher can understand or gain insight into the case by choosing people from whom one is most likely to learn about the issue in question. The location of participants at the same school at which the researcher works is also referred to as convenience sampling, since they were conveniently accessible to the researcher (Ary, Jacobs & Sorensen, and 2010:155). Only educators who had been teaching for between five and 45 years were approached to participate in the study, since they were more 'information rich' (Patton, 1990:169), than newly qualified educators. The selected educators were also rich in experience and carried among them a wealth of information to contribute to the study. Half of the participants selected were grade heads or members of the senior management team because they happened to be the more 'information and experience rich' educators.

A total of 21 participants out of a population of 42 educators were selected and invited to participate. Four educators were interviewed individually, following a semi-structured interview schedule. Two focus groups were conducted, each with six participants (Breakwell, Smith & Wright, and 2011:425). Hence a total of 12 educators participated in the two focus groups, which comprised six foundation phase educators (Grades 1 to 3) and six educators from the intermediate and senior phases (Grades 4 to 7) respectively, so that educators from all grades in the school could be represented. Focus group discussions were guided by the same semi-structured questions as in the individual interview schedule.

Five educators were invited to write narrative accounts, guided by a set of questions and ideas that participants were asked to respond to in written narrative form. The questions and ideas contained the same gist and essence as those on the interview schedule. The format and wording, however, were different, to avoid the narrative



accounts becoming like a questionnaire. All the participants but one contributed to one data collection method, therefore, participant duplication across data collection occurred in one instance only. The participant who contributed to two instruments remembered something of importance to him after the interview had been conducted. I then invited him to contribute to the narrative account instrument by adding anything he wished to add, but had not done so during the interview.

### **3.4 DATA COLLECTION METHODS**

According to Salkind (2012:213), qualitative research is social or behavioural science research that explores the processes that underlie human behaviour using such exploratory techniques as interviews, surveys, case studies and other relatively personal techniques. For the purposes of this investigation the following data collection techniques were used: interviews, focus groups and personal written narrative accounts. A combination of data collection methods was used in an effort to increase the credibility or trustworthiness of the study findings (Menter, Elliot, Hulme, Lewin & Lowden, and 2011:36). Denzin (1970), quoted in Terre Blanche, Durrheim and Painter (2006:380) identifies this as data triangulation, using a variety of data sources in a study.

#### **3.4.1 Interviews**

Interviewing is one of the most powerful and widely used tools in qualitative research (Breakwell, Smith & Wright, and 2012:447). The social constructivist position on interviews, according to Miller and Glassner (2011:132), is that it is an interaction between the interviewer and interview subject in which both participants create and construct narrative versions of the social world. The 'truth' that emerges from that interview, therefore, is only a representation of the 'reality' in that specific context and has no meaning beyond that context. Miller and Glassner (2011:132) similarly offer the following as more of an interpretivist view:

Those of us who aim to understand and document others' understandings choose qualitative interviewing because it provides us with a means for

exploring the point of view of our research subjects, while granting these points of view the culturally honoured status of reality.

This fits the intention of this study, which is to determine the realities of educators in the context of the school at which the study has been conducted.

Gillham (2000) asserts that interviews may lie on a continuum between structured and unstructured depending on the purpose for which they are required (see Table 3.1, below). This research study employed semi-structured interviews, as shaded in the table.

**Table 3.1:** The verbal data dimension (Gillham, 2000)

Unstructured ←————→ Structured						
Listening to other people's conversation; a kind of verbal observation	Using 'natural' conversation to ask research questions	'Open-ended' interviews: just a few key opening questions	Semi-structured interviews, i.e. open and closed questions	Recording schedules ; in effect, verbally administered questionnaires	Semi-structured questionnaires: multiple choice and open questions	Structured questionnaires: simple, specific, closed questions

In determining whether an interview is appropriate for collecting the required data, Gillham (2000:11) proposes the following criteria for selecting interviewing as a data collection tool:

- Small numbers of people are involved
- People are accessible
- Most of the questions are 'open' and require an extended response with prompts and probes
- Everyone is 'key' and one cannot afford to lose any
- The material is sensitive in character so that trust is involved
- Anonymity is not an issue, though confidentiality may be
- Depth of meaning is central, with only some approximation to typicality
- Research aims mainly require insight and understanding

These criteria are a good expression of the researcher's intention in using interviews as a data collection tool. Individual interviews were conducted with four educators at the school, digitally recorded and transcribed to facilitate data analysis.

### **3.4.2 Focus groups**

Another powerful method of qualitative data collection is a focus group in which six to eight people are interviewed as a group (Punch, 2009:357). Such a group, according to Mentor, Elliot, Hulme, Lewin and Lowden (2011:148) consists of "people with similar characteristics selected from a wide population that is convened to elicit, via moderated discussion, members' views, attitudes and experiences relating to a particular topic relevant to the research being conducted". The rationale behind using focus groups rather than group interviews is for the participants to interact with each other, rather than with the interviewer, so that the views of the participants' can emerge (Cohen et al., 2011, Wilkinson, 2011). The data emerges from this interaction and the agenda of the participants' predominates over that of the researcher. Ary, Jacobs and Sorenson (2010:381) propose the following useful features of focus groups:

- The interaction within the focus group may enable the researcher to see how participants incorporate the viewpoints of others in structuring their own understandings.
- Focus groups are helpful because they bring into contact several different perspectives.
- Focus groups make more economical use of time and money than do individual interviews and are more socially oriented.
- The topics and ideas expressed in the focus group can help the researcher to identify questions and other important aspects of the phenomenon to pursue in the study.

According to Morgan (1993:17), "the interaction in focus groups often creates a cuing phenomenon that has the potential for extracting more information than other methods."

For all the aforementioned reasons, the researcher considered focus groups to be an appropriate data collection instrument. In addition to those reasons, the researcher was also interested in determining if any differences existed in the experiences, perceptions and dynamics of the foundation phase educators as a group and the group of educators from the intermediate and senior phases. This explains why the two focus groups were constituted by phase and not more randomly.

### **3.4.3 Narrative accounts**

Breakwell (2012:393) perceives interviews and questionnaires as belonging to a genre of data collection methods in which research participants verbally self-report on what they think, feel or do. She further describes self-recording methods, such as diaries and narratives, as a sub-set of the self-reporting genre. Breakwell (2012:402) defines a narrative, as used in psychology, to be, at the most simplistic level, “a story or an account that the individual tells about themselves, currently or in the past, or about events or people that they have experienced.”

The idea for this data collection method arose from the writings of Simons (2009:49), who had a challenge similar to that of researcher's; trying to interview more people without the luxury of sufficient time in which to do it. Educators in the school, at which this study was conducted, are constantly engaged in activities, including extra and co-curricular activities, such as sport, concert practice, marking and further administrative tasks. The Gauteng Department of Education (GDE) had also specified in the research approval that all interviews were to be conducted after school so as not to compromise contact time between learners and educators. Educators value their time, so a more expedient method of data collection was required. Simons (2009:49) discusses a form of non face-to-face interviews that is conducted through the post. She suggests that such interviews enable participants to reflect on questions in the absence of the researcher, allowing them the space to think and say without trying to please the interviewer.

The researcher combined the ideas of Breakwell (2012:402) and Simons (2011:49) to create a form of self-recording in which participants were invited to write narrative accounts about their experiences of transformation and change in education. The

accounts were guided by semi-structured questions because the information required relating to the research question needed to be specified to some degree.

### **3.5 DATA ANALYSIS AND SYNTHESIS**

Bloomberg and Volpe (2012:227) consider it important to mention firstly how data was recorded, managed and stored. Individual interviews and focus group discussions were digitally recorded, then transferred to a computer from which a CD could be cut to save the recordings electronically. These recordings were transcribed electronically and saved on the computer in a folder requiring password access. Narrative accounts were collected from participants and photocopied for coding and commenting on. Original accounts were filed in a locked up cabinet, where they will stay for a period of two years after the research has been conducted.

Ary, Jacobs and Sorenson (2010:480) describe data analysis as the “process whereby researchers systematically search and arrange their data in order to increase their understanding of the data and to enable them to present what they learned to others.” The challenge facing researchers is to “make sense of copious amounts of data and to construct a framework for communicating the essence of what the data reveal” (Ary, et al., 2010:480). In reference to the social sciences, Denzin, quoted in Simons (2009:118) asserts that “nothing speaks for itself – there is only interpretation.”

“Data can be analysed in a variety of ways, including, thematic content analysis, grounded theory, discourse analysis or narrative analysis, among others” (Terre Blanche, Durrheim & Painter, 2006:322), and the type of analysis chosen will be influenced by factors that include the purpose of the study, the type of study conducted and the number of data sets or people from whom data have been collected (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011:538).

For the purpose of this study, which seeks to explore the experiences of educators in a full service primary school in the face of change and transformation in education, the process of analysis began with content analysis, growing into thematic analysis from which a form of discourse analysis evolved.

The process of interpreting and analysing the data from the data collection methods, namely interviews, focus group interviews and narrative accounts was the same with regard to analysis and interpretation procedures. The difference was that the narrative accounts were not transcribed and therefore not electronically accessible to code and comment on according to the relevant themes. Narrative accounts were coded manually by making numbering the lines and electronically transcribing the lines under the relevant codes onto a *Microsoft Word* document according to the identified themes. As described in Chapter 1, the following steps, as proposed by Terre Blanche et al. (2006), guided the data analysis process, as interpreted by the researcher and merged with complementary information from other sources.

**Step1: Familiarisation and immersion.** Ary et al. (2010:425) similarly refer to this step as 'familiarisation and organisation'. Both descriptions evoke an image of the researcher wallowing in and wading through the emerging data. Ary et al. (2010:425) and (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2011:537) advise that data collection and data analysis ought to take place simultaneously to enable the researcher to manage the copious amounts of data more efficiently and meaningfully. The researcher listened to and read through data as soon as it came in and began to reflect on the meaning of the data, developing hunches about what it meant and seeking to confirm or refute those hunches in subsequent interviews, as suggested by Ary et al. (2010:425).

**Step 2: Inducing themes.** The essence of what the data reveals gradually becomes more evident as themes begin to emerge that relate to the research question. After the researcher had identified themes, a *Word* document for each theme was opened on the computer.

**Step 3: Coding.** Punch (2011:356) defines coding simply as placing labels or tags on pieces of qualitative data. He refers to it as the starting activity in qualitative analysis and the foundation for what comes later. This step for the researcher entailed inspecting the data very closely to find the specific sentences, phrases or words that related to the identified themes; to highlight them and to 'label' them according to the themes, categories and subcategories as they emerged.

The researcher followed the coding process as described below:

- Each participant was assigned an alphanumeric code.

- Comments (labels) were made onto the transcriptions and narrative accounts to identify the issues as they arose in the data.
- Broad themes were identified and saved into separate word documents, that is, one document per theme.
- Every sentence relating to an identified theme was then electronically copied and pasted onto the relevant theme document, so that the researcher could see, at a glance, who and what the reference to the theme was.

The alphanumeric coding was as follows:

Data collection method (Number of participants in brackets)	Participant number (alphanumeric code)					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
Individual interviews (4)	I1	I2	I3	I4		
Narrative accounts (5)	N1	N2	N3	N4	N5	
Focus group 1 (6)	F1A	F1B	F1C	F1D	F1E	F1F
Focus group 2 (6)	F2A	F2B	F2C	F2D	F2E	F2F

**Step 4: Elaboration.** During this part of the process themes are explored more closely to capture the nuances of meaning that may have been missed during the initial coding process. This is done by comparing sections of text to gain a sense of whether they are sufficiently similar or too different to be grouped together (Terre Blanche & Painter, 2006:326).

**Step 5: Interpretation and checking.** As the subtitle suggests this is the final step in the analysis process and refers to the reviewing and fine-tuning of the gathered information into appropriate and justified interpretations (Terre Blanche et al. 2006:326).

Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011) propose the following four methods, identified by Potter and Wetherall (2001) to conduct discourse analysis of written or transcripts of spoken text:

- Analyse the words in context, as ways in which people express themselves and how context affects meaning and language.
- Analyse interactions conducted through language.

- Analyse patterns of language use (e.g., language used to express wishes, emotions, and reactions, to create scenarios, to give information).
- Analyse the links between language and the constitution, structure and nature of society, often focused on differentials of power and their reproduction.

### **3.6 STRATEGIES TO ENSURE TRUSTWORTHINESS**

Simons (2009:128) traces the development of criteria for reliability and validity as it moves further away from the positivist paradigm to a more constructivist space in qualitative research. She refers to the work of Guba and Lincoln (1985), who suggested a set of criteria parallel to the traditional criteria of internal and external validity, reliability and objectivity. They introduced the concept of *trustworthiness* in 1985 with the parallel criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability, respectively (Simons, 2009:128). Guba and Lincoln further refined these criteria and in 1989 proposed a new set of criteria around *authenticity*; the new criteria included fairness, respecting participants' perspectives and empowering them to act.

The process of proving reliability and validity is frequently referred to as "rigour" in qualitative research (Ary et al. 2010:497). The guiding principles around trustworthiness in this study are based on the criteria as initially proposed by Guba and Lincoln (1985).

#### **3.6.1 Credibility**

The interpretivist nature of qualitative research makes the issue of credibility central to a qualitative study. The issue of validity is a crucial aspect of all research in that it reflects the integrity of the study and the degree to which the research is accurate or believable (Ary et al., 2010:498). In qualitative research the preferred term for the validity of a study is credibility. Toma (2006:413) suggests that research is credible when what the researcher presents describes the reality of the participants who informed the research in ways that resonate with them. The researcher has a responsibility to accurately depict or represent the realities of the participants. One



way of enhancing credibility is by means of data triangulation, by which the researcher wants to find support for the observations and conclusions using more than one data source (Ary et al., 2010:499).

This study uses three methods of collecting data in an effort to determine whether the data collected with one method confirms data using a different method.

### **3.6.2 Dependability**

Qualitative researchers consider the dependability of their study rather than its reliability. Reliability, in quantitative research, refers to the degree of consistency of findings or behaviour if the study should be replicated. This is possible in tightly controlled research situations as used in quantitative research (Ary et al. 2010:502). In qualitative research, however, variability is expected because contexts are more transient, susceptible to change and multiple realities exist (Terre Blanche et al. 2006:93; Ary et al., 2010:502). Terre Blanche et al. (2006:94) suggest that dependability can be achieved by providing the reader “with rich and detailed descriptions that show how certain actions and opinions are rooted in, and develop out of, contextual interaction”. They also suggest that the reader should be provided with a frank statement of the methods used to collect and analyse data, as is attempted in 3.4 and 3.5 above. Ary et al. (2010:502) agree that what they call an ‘audit trail’ can enhance dependability, as documenting how the study was conducted so that others can determine how decisions were made and gauge the uniqueness of the situation.

### **3.6.3 Transferability**

Transferability, in qualitative research, refers to the idea of how useful the study can be to other researchers in similar situations, with similar research questions (Toma, 2006:414). Stated differently, transferability is “the degree to which the findings of a qualitative study can be applied or generalised to other contexts or groups” (Ary et al., 2010:501). This is achieved by providing sufficiently rich, detailed, thick descriptions of the context so that the reader can make the necessary comparisons

and judgements about similarity or transferability to other contexts and cases (Ary et al., 2010:501).

#### **3.6.4 Confirmability**

Toma (2006:417) defines confirmability as the concept that “the data can be confirmed by someone other than the researcher”. The data, therefore, rather than the researcher need to be objective. The researcher should neither ‘fabricate’ findings nor impose his or her own ‘biases and prejudices’ on to the findings (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). In phenomenological studies the idea of ‘bracketing’ becomes useful with regard to enhancing confirmability of the study. Bracketing is a term coined by Husserl urging the researcher to put aside his or her own preconceptions about a phenomenon or the world, to allow the perceptions and conceptions embedded in the research data, to emerge. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011:18), in their explication of Husserl’s philosophies, refer to it as ‘freeing ourselves from our usual ways of perceiving the world’ and ‘looking beyond the details of everyday life to the essences underlying them’. Bloomberg and Volpe (2012:33) acknowledge the difficulty in doing this and consider bracketing personal experiences to be almost impossible. They do, however, seem to agree with Creswell (2009), whom they quote as advising researchers to “decide how and in what ways her or his own personal understanding can be introduced into the study and usefully incorporated in to the analysis”.

### **3.7 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

Ryen (2011:432) captures the essence of ethical considerations in her assertion that “knowledge production comes with moral responsibility towards research participants”. She further draws attention to the vulnerability of research participants. The researcher further has an ethical obligation to report findings truthfully. The ethical considerations and procedures followed in the planning and preparation for the study included the following:

Approval to conduct the research in a public school was sought from the GDE, Johannesburg West District 12, the school principal and the chairperson of the SGB. All applications for approval were successful.

Application was then made to the University of South Africa (UNISA) for ethical clearance to conduct the research in completion of a degree under the auspices of the University.

Research participants were then asked to complete consent forms so that they understood what the study entailed and their rights within the process. They were assured of their anonymity and the confidentiality that would be honoured throughout and after the research process. Consent forms contained little identifying information in an attempt to be sensitive to the vulnerability of the participants with regard to their anonymity. Non-disclosure agreements were signed by each focus group participant so that confidential and sensitive information shared during focus groups would remain confidential and not be shared outside the focus group forum.

The researcher endeavoured, as far as possible, to respect the dignity and integrity of all participants and to engage with interest and empathy to all information shared.

The data collection and analysis processes were conducted diligently and in line with trusted methods and guidelines proposed by recognised and respected researchers, as acknowledged throughout this chapter.

### **3.8 THE ROLE OF THE RESEARCHER**

Simons (2009:37) offers the following set of questions to consider when deciding on one's role as a researcher in the research process:

- Do I like to be a participant or non-participant observer?
- Do I prefer a formal interview style or one that seeks to engage interviewees in telling their stories, either through deep listening or establishing a dialogue?
- Do I prefer to work with secondary data or documents unravelling the history of a programme or policy?

- Do I wish to conduct a collaborative case study or one that is external and independent?
- What are the drawbacks and benefits of different roles?
- Do I have the skills of the storyteller? Or documentary film-maker? What else might I need to learn?
- What kind of role (and style of reporting) will my audience accept?

Based on these questions, the role of the researcher is as a participant observer, seeking to engage participants in sharing their experiences, through the process of deep listening and establishing dialogue. The researcher does not therefore, retain distance from the participants, but is careful to bracket her own preconceptions (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2011:18) about transformation and change in the South African education system. Furthermore, this research is based on the experiences of educators as primary data sources. The study is undertaken independently by the researcher and is not collaborative. The researcher is continuously in the process of learning in an endeavour to acquire skills necessary for effective empirical research, ever mindful that there is always more to learn and that the point of knowing is an aspiration more than a destination.

### **3.9 CONCLUSION**

This chapter aspired to describe the research design for this study in sufficient detail, so that the processes and reasoning behind certain choices and procedures were explained. A rationale pertaining to the three salient elements of research design, namely philosophical worldview, strategies of enquiry and research methods, was given.

This is a qualitative study, drawing on the assumptions inherent in the interpretivist and social constructivist paradigms or philosophies. The strategies of enquiry include a combination of phenomenology, interpretative phenomenological analysis and case study.

Participants were purposefully selected on the basis that they were simultaneously 'information rich' as well as rich in experience. They were also accessible since the

researcher works in the same environment as the participants. This is referred to as convenience sampling.

Three methods were selected to acquire the required data. These were individual interviews, focus groups and narrative accounts. These data collection instruments were described and the justification for their use discussed in the context of this study. The process of data analysis was explained as well as the ways in which data was recorded, managed and stored.

Strategies to ensure trustworthiness of a research study are critical to ensure credibility, dependability, validity and confirmability of a study. These criteria were described as well as the steps taken to ensure that this study complied with the requirements

The chapter further explored ethical issues that were considered as the research was conducted, to protect the rights of research participants and to ensure that the research was conducted ethically and the findings truthfully reported.

Lastly, it is important for the role of the researcher to be clarified and declared, as is done in this chapter. In the following chapter the analysis and interpretation of the research findings will be presented.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA**

#### **4.1. INTRODUCTION**

This research study set out to explore how educators at a full service primary school are experiencing transformation and continuous occupational related change. In the previous chapter the methods used to derive this information were explained. In this chapter, the findings that emerged from that process will be presented, thematically, with reference to input from research participants. Categories and sub-categories of themes will be discussed under their respective themes. In certain cases data may overlap categories and will be cross-referenced accordingly.

Research participants are referred to according to the alphanumeric codes described in chapter three. The prefixes apply as follows: I for individual interviews (e.g. *I2* refers to individual interview 2); F1 or F2 for focus groups, (*F1A* refers to participant A in focus group 1; *F2C* is participant C in focus group 2); N for narrative accounts, (*N3* refers to narrative account 3).

Before the findings can be presented, however, it is necessary to describe in greater detail the research setting and its context.

#### **4.2 CONTEXT OF THE RESEARCH SETTING AND PARTICIPANTS**

The research was conducted with educators at a single institution which reflected the case study aspect of the research design. This bounded case was a former model C primary school in a district in Gauteng, enjoying many of the privileges associated with former model C schools, such as sports facilities and additional educators paid by the school governing body (SGB) to reduce class sizes and provide effective learning and teaching. Many of the learners, however, were not advantaged and some parents made great sacrifices for their children to attend the school and have an opportunity to receive what they perceived to be a good education. The school

had transformed in the previous 20 years following the change in government and the subsequent transformation of the education system from multiple, disparate education departments to a single education system. Such transformation had been characterised by curriculum reform, the decentralisation of power to provinces and districts and a policy of inclusion. The school had also changed in terms of the demographics of educators and learners, managers and governors, the socio-economic circumstance of families served by the school and societal changes such as an increase in single parent families, families experiencing financial difficulties, families affected by substance abuse and domestic violence as well as child neglect, among others.

Even though educators were working in a relatively advantaged environment, many of the learners at the school were relatively disadvantaged, and educators still appeared to be challenged by the demands and implications of aspects of the education system, such as curriculum change, increase in administrative tasks and a myriad of policies and interpretations of policies that compromise consistency and impede optimal learning and teaching.

### 4.3 DISCUSSION OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

The data from which these findings were derived, was gathered by way of individual interviews with four participants, two focus groups with six educators each and narrative accounts written by a further five educators, making a total of 21 research participants out of a population of 42 educators.

Table 4.3 (below) depicts an overview of the analysis.

**Table 4.3:** *Summary of themes, categories and sub-categories*

Themes	Categories	Sub-categories
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Changes that have impacted educators most	Curriculum change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Frequent curriculum change prevents mastery of subject matter</li> <li>• Curriculum as barrier to effective learning and teaching and not of benefit to learners</li> <li>• Time pressure and overload: insufficient time to consolidate concepts, support and enrich</li> <li>• Lack of consistency</li> </ul>
	Increase in administrative tasks and paperwork	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase in time consuming and unnecessary administrative tasks</li> <li>• Support forms</li> <li>• Paperwork and admin tasks compromising effective learning and teaching</li> <li>• Time eroded by duplication of work</li> </ul>
	Official demands	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Untimely demands from the district office in particular</li> </ul>
	Coping with diversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Educator diversity</li> <li>• Learner diversity</li> <li>• Socio-economic diversity</li> <li>• Differing perspectives of educators from different previous dispensation education departments and cultural or race groups</li> </ul>
	Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Different forms of assessment</li> <li>• Increase in number of tasks</li> </ul>
	Societal changes including discipline of learners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Societal problems</li> <li>• Focus on rights of children, educators are powerless</li> </ul>
	Transition from mainstream to full service school	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of consultation</li> <li>• Educators not equipped for task / Feelings of inadequacy</li> <li>• Inadequate support strategies</li> </ul>
	Changes in management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Positive and negative responses</li> <li>• Management styles</li> </ul>
Educators' current feelings towards their profession	Educators' perceptions of reasons for changes in education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Positive intent</li> <li>• Political nature of change</li> </ul>
	Low morale	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Voices not heard</li> <li>• Poor publicity and lack of respect for profession</li> <li>• Educators not given credit for their professionalism</li> <li>• Feeling overwhelmed, frustrated and exhausted</li> </ul>



	Low remuneration VS effort and time spent working	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Financial implications of being educators</li> </ul>
	Occupational satisfaction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Educators do enjoy aspects of their work</li> </ul>
Educators' perception of support received from other stakeholders	Colleagues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Supportive colleagues</li> <li>'Slackers'</li> <li>Lack of trust</li> <li>Insufficient understanding of or respect for diversity</li> </ul>
	School Management Team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lack of unity, collaboration and vision within SMT</li> <li>Insufficient planning</li> <li>Lack of support with regard to discipline</li> <li>Maintenance of facilities</li> <li>Slow decision making</li> </ul>
	School Governing Body	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Supportive</li> <li>Previous acrimonious relations</li> </ul>
	District officials, Provincial and National education departments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lack of confidence in abilities and knowledge of managers and department officials</li> <li>Officious and unsupportive</li> <li>Lack of consistency</li> <li>Playing fields not levelled</li> <li>Breakdown in co-operative relationship between school and district</li> <li>Resources used for curriculum delivery</li> </ul>
	Parents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Promote disrespect towards educators</li> <li>Lack of parental support and involvement</li> <li>Need for parental guidance</li> </ul>
	Learners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Concern for their well being</li> <li>Challenges with discipline</li> </ul>
Ideas shared by educators regarding input by themselves and from other stakeholders to support them in managing the	Educator input	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Flexibility</li> <li>Attitudinal (mindset) change</li> <li>Reduce pessimism and scepticism</li> </ul>
	Input from other stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mentorship</li> <li>Support from external agencies</li> <li>Parent support</li> <li>Support from within the school</li> </ul>

changes more effectively		
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#### **4.3.1 Theme 1: Changes that have impacted on educators**

As discussed in Chapter 2, many of the changes involved in the process of transformation and change in the South African education system have had direct bearing on educators who ultimately are responsible for implementing the policies. Some of the changes were easier for educators to manage and adapt to, and others were more difficult, as described in the first identified theme. The changes that have impacted on educators most significantly, according to the research, were assigned to eight categories, as follows:

1. Curriculum change, which continues to be challenging for the majority of respondents.
2. The increasing administrative demands and workload on educators.
3. Official demands made on educators by district, provincial and national education departments.
4. Information relating to issues of diversity, both conscious and inadvertent, as revealed by respondents. Some of these issues appear to reflect a certain discourse among South Africans relating to transformation and the perceptions of people from different racial or cultural groups, including educators who were previously part of the disparate education departments of old.
5. The fifth category relates to how assessment practices have changed and the demands of a new approach to assessment and a loaded assessment programme with insufficient guidance.
6. The challenges of societal change, including issues of learner discipline. There appears to be a perception among educators that learners' rights have taken precedence over the authority and power of educators, and that respect for educators has diminished.

The six categories above reflect perceptions of changes within the broader education system and society in general, while the following two categories reflect perceptions of changes specific to the school at which the research was conducted.

7. As mentioned previously, the school at which this study was conducted had made a transition from a mainstream to a full service school as described and envisioned by White Paper 6 (2001). The seventh category deals with the challenges and reality, as experienced by educators, inherent in that transition.
8. The perceptions of educators regarding the changes in school management that they have experienced.

#### **4.3.1.1 Curriculum change**

Harley and Wedekind's (2004:195) assertion that curriculum reform in South Africa is possibly unparalleled in the history of curriculum change is reflected in the impact it has had on educators, in the absence of sufficient support to effectively manage and integrate the changes: *'...then we had OBE, and then we had NCS for the curriculum, then we had RNCS and then now we have CAPS. So in eleven years I have been through four different things.'* (F2A L56-57); *'...it was this wave that you didn't know what to do because... the change started, but no guidance was given. It leaves you in the dark. It made me feel very unsure and insecure.'* (F1C L 38-40); *'...the new terminology was difficult to absorb and to relate to prior learning.'* (N2 L 22-23); *'...this has had the most profound impact on me.'* (F2F L84); *'I've had to adjust big time because first of all, the kind of education that I come from and the kind of education that I'm in, as a teacher, are way too different in that some of the things were not there when I was at school; and to implement it I need to know about it and it takes a lot of reading, it takes a lot of mistakes to actually be able to implement it as effectively as what the department intends it to be.'* (I1 L49-53). This last comment is significant in that the participant feels that his education and training were deficient, and did not prepare him adequately for his current task as an educator. In considering Kurt Lewin's Three Phase Model of Change, it is possible

that educators had not been enabled to go through these processes adequately as they tried to integrate each change successfully.

Some educators felt that it was difficult to become a subject or curriculum specialist, or to master the curriculum sufficiently to make it interesting and improve on teaching strategies because it was fast-paced and changed often: *'...it's a very fast pace, this education, for me. The children are not grasping anything and I have become stupid. I don't know what I'm doing here. I really can't tell you, content wise, what I'm supposed to teach because there is not enough time given to me to grasp and understand what I am teaching.'* (F2F L96-99); *'...you can't keep your things and work on it and make it better...and improve it. You have to change it every time and start over. That's a big change for me.'* (F2D L67-69); *'I would like the curriculum to settle now, so I can learn to work it to my benefit and to the benefit of the learners; obviously with the number of assessments reduced.'* (N2 L330-334); *'Before, in teaching, we had a system that worked. There were not so many assessments involved and we knew what we were teaching... even though that system didn't change for a number of years, we got used to what we were teaching. We got used to the content so we could branch out and start experimenting on like... the history on the Khoi-khoi, I can go a bit further into that...and start experimenting and growing and making it interesting for me as well as for the children. Then the different curriculum changes came and, I can tell you, I have learned absolutely nothing. I am rushed, I am hurried. I am teaching now like it's a runaway train.'* (F2F L86-93). According to the norms and standards for educators (DoE, 2000), they are required to be curriculum specialists. Educators at this school appear to find it challenging to master the curriculum and become a specialist in it because of the frequent revisions.

Complaints reported on by a review committee (2009) that children were not making the expected progress with regard to scholastic skills, and what Hoadley (2011:143) refers to as "pedagogical shortcomings", appear to be an area of concern in this school too. Educators felt that learners were not benefitting from curriculum changes: *'It's not the change as such, but the fact that the change was not for the child's benefit.'* (F1C L 143-144). Coupled with this feeling was a sense that the curriculum had become a barrier to effective learning and teaching, compromised to the extent

that it now appeared that the learners were somehow deficient: *'...I just realised but we don't have time for consolidation. It's so much paperwork and I personally feel that ... the child is losing out here.'* (F1A L 87-88); *'...there just does not seem to be time to consolidate concepts with these children and I'm going to say it now, straight out, now our children look stupid because they don't manage the workload...they can't cope, and these kids are not stupid.'* (F1C L145-149); *'I think that's the drawback in education in general [referring to the frequent changes and lack of consistency] ...because you don't work out a system that you know will work for the children and I think we ran away from the fact that we are actually working for the children. We need to educate the children and at this stage...we are grabbing here, there and everywhere and we lost track of the children, the children's education.'* (F2E L70-74); *'Children as 'people' don't seem to be a focus – its results, books, volume of work.'* (N3 L4-5)

Consistent with the findings of Chisholm et al. (2005:184), the majority of respondents felt overwhelmed and attributed time pressure and overload as causes of insufficient time to consolidate concepts with learners, supporting those experiencing barriers to learning and enriching those who mastered concepts easily: *'I feel I'm not doing justice to the child...it's not about me, it's not about you, it's about the child. I want to consolidate, I know that child needs more attention, but I can't get there.'* (F1A L95-98); *'I picture these poor kids. If I feel like this, how must they feel? I don't know, from day to day, am I reaching [learner in need of support] because he just sits - switched off to the world and I can't go back and work one to one with him... I must continue, I must assess, I must get it done....'* (F2B L242-246); *'I felt pressured all the time and anxious about the slower learning children who, because of the pressure to get through the curriculum, were rushed all the time and I find it is difficult to finish pieces of work.'* (N1 L2-4); *'The curriculum is very rushed, little time for consolidation. We appear to be trying to improve standards by simply piling on more work!'* (N3 L41-44); *'And all the common exams and the ANA [Annual National Assessments] add pressure. The pace has to increase in the classroom. And our school is still expected to deliver mainstream results. We are expected to give sixty to seventy percent averages. Plus I have to adapt the CAPS specifications. CAPS says teach advanced language concepts that are difficult even for mainstream learners.'* (N2 L251-259). There appears to be an urgency to get work done and to

assess, and the scenario depicted by these educators raises issues similar to those commented on by the international review committee on South Africa's education policies:

Any curriculum design needs to take account of the time available for teaching and learning; learners cannot be expected to demonstrate achievement of learning outcomes if they have not had adequate opportunities to learn, and teachers cannot be expected to complete their learning programmes unless there is sufficient "time on task" in the classroom (OECD Report, 2008:175).

Educators appear to feel powerless to determine the pace and level of work that would be most conducive to learning. They are aware that learners are in need of support, consolidation and attention, yet they ignore the needs of the child in order to present and assess the curriculum, which in any case cannot be delivered to a child who is not ready to receive it. A current educational discourse is that many educators are ineffective, incompetent and/or responsible for the lack of curriculum delivery. Perhaps educators who do take their roles and work seriously are determined to deliver the curriculum, regardless of whether the potential recipients are ready or able to receive it. Many educators are embarrassed by their underperforming colleagues and do not wish to be associated with that perception. Perhaps some educators at this school feel pressurised to prove that they are competent, that their administration and paperwork are faultless, that their books are marked and their assessment deadlines met, and that they can be accountable for how they comply with policy. They may inadvertently be compromising learners in the process. Coupled with this is the pressure on educators from the district and provincial department to complete the paperwork that they require, prepare learners for common and national exams and comply with any other demands and requests.

There were participants who were more optimistic and positive about curriculum change and viewed it as being well intended and manageable: *'CAPS, because of the process already undergone, does make sense. It is helpful. It is less complex and forces organisation and productivity... many teachers complain that CAPS is still too full, however, there are ways of managing the material that has to be taught but you do have to use every minute of class time productively. You have to have a plan and remain focused.'* (N2 L41-44, 53-58). What is interesting about this comment is

an acknowledgement that through revision, the curriculum is improving and becoming less complex. This bears on a debate between South African intellectuals regarding fundamental (e.g. CNE) versus progressivist (e.g. OBE) pedagogy (Hugo, 2010). An emerging discourse observes that slowly, through curriculum reform, we are moving back to a more fundamental pedagogy following the failure of our progressive OBE. This after investing much money, effort, training, advocacy and the incalculable cost of a generation of learners who did not derive educational benefit from being in school.

There were those who were seemingly unaffected by the changes: *'...curriculum changes have never been a major issue...I've always been a language teacher...my experience was it didn't really worry us as language teachers...Tell me what you want me to do, and within those boundaries I will make it work for me.'* (I2 L48-59); *'I think all of the changes had an impact but I wasn't really bothered, because there was always support from school, colleagues, training for CAPS (N1 L9-11).* Some educators appeared to be indifferent or had adopted a fatalistic attitude in order to cope and survive: *I feel indifferent towards these changes, kind of just accept whatever happens.* (N1 L3-5, 9-11, 17)

With regard to the implementation of the most recent curriculum revision, educators appear to be frustrated by the lack of consistency and mixed messages as people in senior positions were interpreting policy differently: *'...even in the school nobody knows because when I went to [HOD1] ...she said it's fine because the department, at our training, said, you can adapt it as long as it fits into the school year, but then we went to [HOD2] and she said, no, you have to stick to it week by week, so even in the school there's miscommunication going on.'* (F2C L 172-176); *'...when we have our cluster meetings...our cluster leader will tell us, for example, with the ANA, "No, help the children. If you need to read to them, read to them. If they want extra time, give them extra time, if you need to read to the whole class then read to the whole class...but then at a principals meeting they are told something completely different.'* (F2C L210-214); *'...two subjects have become one, it's been a double change, everything is new, and you have to redo everything this, year without any support and guidance, except' "It's wrong." and, "Let's do it different.", but not what different...even the government tests, they say let's put these two subjects as one but then you can clearly see that this first forty marks is NS and the last ten*

*questions is Technology – that’s not integrating the subject. That’s still having two subjects, next to each other...they don’t know how to do it properly...they support this national initiative, but on provincial or district level, there’s still academic lack of involvement...Maybe it’s been well thought through on national level but I’m not seeing it on district level.’* (I3 L126-129, 144-156). These comments illustrate the degree to which Dada et al. (2009:7) were accurate in their reflection on the widespread confusion emanating from the existence of too many “policies, guidelines and interpretations of policies and guidelines at all levels of the education system.” This speaks to the challenges inherent in the decentralisation of power, as provincial education departments (PDEs) have the autonomy to enable curriculum delivery as they deem appropriate. It also reflects the prevalent political discourse around the competence of people in senior government positions, as discussed more fully later in this chapter.

While there appear to be difficulties with consistent interpretation of policy, the perception among some educators is that others are simply not complying with it: *‘There are many schools that are not doing the bare minimum. So they think that by getting a specific curriculum, and by getting everybody to follow this, that everybody is going to do it...you get schools that won’t do it anyway... I had a girl who came from [school in KwaZulu-Natal] with a seventy percent for [a subject], and she gets thirty-eight percent here. Her government [subject] book was untouched... Now it is policy for you to follow that book...If she had done that and come here there would have been no problem.’* (F2A L279-285). This is not an isolated case, and the researcher knows from being a member of the School Based Support Team (SBST). Often children come from other schools within the same province or district and they have no other barriers to learning besides not having been taught adequately. The inequality and inconsistency clearly still exists between schools.

The difficulties with consistency extend to the use of resources: *‘...I said to [district official], “I’m using [Textbook A] for LO [Life Orientation] and she said ... “Oh my goodness! Horrible book...you must use [Textbook B]” ...so we all went into a panic - photocopied quickly the [Textbook B] as well, because that was when we wrote that exam [common exams]... and they were asking everything out of the [Textbook B].’* (F2D L177-187), *‘There is no consistency... this is supposed to be national; where*



*we're all on the same level, we're all using the same book; because this is what happened with OBE. It was so vast, there were no guidelines given, you could do your own thing and that was a problem as some of us really went to town....There's no standardised book.'* (F2F L191-194, 207). A similar problem was found by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) review committee, resulting in their recommendation that procedures for approving textbook lists need to be reviewed and new schemes for the provision of textbooks introduced (OECD Report, 2008:370). Of concern to the researcher is the fact that common exams are set from information in specific textbooks. This must put tremendous pressure on educators and learners to cover all possible bases; not to mention the disadvantage for learners in schools who do not have textbooks.

Within and across specific subjects, support and subject requirements also appear to be inconsistent. Speaking about how easy it was in a particular subject<sup>4</sup>, one educator said: *'You have to follow that book and that's it...the [subject] one tells you, day one, week one, do these pages. And the prep is given to you... It's set out for you; even the tests are given to you. You just have to roneo the stuff and give it to the kids. Now why is every school not doing the same thing?... I don't have to do any prep. I literally walk in and turn the pages every day. So I do get time to teach.'* (F2A L284/5, 296/7,301-304). A fellow participant's response was: *'But [subject] is the only organised learning area... subject. I think that was the idea that every teacher would teach like that, but somewhere the people who are putting these things together, didn't do it according to what they've done it.'* (F2B L299, 305/6). Different service providers were commissioned to design learning material for curriculum delivery but they did not all provide the same level of work. It is interesting to note how the language in the last comment illustrates the mental shifts educators constantly need to make to navigate the changing terminology.

#### **4.3.1.2 Increase in administrative tasks and paperwork**

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<sup>4</sup> Subjects are not specified, as far as possible, to protect the identities of participants.

In line with the findings of Chisholm, Hoadley, Kivulu, Brookes, Prinsloo, Kgobe, Mosia, Narsee and Rule (2005:184), educator workload continues to be overwhelming. Since the report there have been two shifts in curriculum, namely Foundations for Learning, and more recently, Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements (CAPS). In practice, workload has not decreased and all but one of the participants referred to the increase in paperwork. These increases are a source of frustration to educators and they feel that it continues to compromise effective learning and teaching, even after curricula have been refined and a theoretical attempt made to reduce them. In response to the question regarding what exactly the paperwork was, educators began by talking about support forms, these being documentary evidence of intervention strategies to support learners who experience barriers to learning. Educators soon began to add daily administrative tasks that cut into teaching time: *'Support forms, paperwork, is way too much, and the marking is way too much. Everybody tells me, you're are doing too much, but then I say... "What must I leave out?" ...you have to mark.'* (F2D L579-583); *'Huge increase in paperwork – forms need to be completed for everything.'* (N3 L 2-3). The following is an example of one such task that has to be performed daily:

During 2013, Principals in the district were given electronic communication devices through which to submit daily statistics and other information to the district. The intention was that a daily register be taken every morning, as was usually done, but now this had to be submitted to the office on a form every morning. Grade heads were responsible for collecting it from the educators in that grade and submitting it to the office, first thing every morning, then the school would submit it to the district office. The weekly register, containing the same information, then had to be submitted on a Friday morning too. Educators expressed frustration with the time wasted on duplication of work: *'...like this attendance thing in the morning.'* (F1F L273-274); *'...It is a nightmare; I mean I check my homework in the mornings. You try and share some news with the kids...'* (F1C L 277-278); *'...you try and start your day off right...now you start your day off like that and they're (the children) not paying any attention to you.'* (F1D L 279-282); *'I used to walk in, teach all day, mark and prepare worksheets in the afternoon. Now, I rush around all morning, gathering data or forms or statistics. And it seems that so much is repetitive. Stats on learners for the last two years appear to be asked for over and over and not entered into a data*

*base that goes with them from grade to grade. The documentation required for each learner is overwhelming... the merit book, minutes of grade meetings, parent meetings, disciplinary meetings, therapy reports...the paper trail.'* (N2 L216-234). This justifies Jansen's (1997:3-9) warning that the "administrative burden on teachers would multiply in their attempt to manage OBE." Even though OBE has been dispensed with, it appears to have left a legacy of increased administration and paperwork.

Support forms are a great source of frustration for educators: *'The support forms has increased in ridiculousness.'* (F1C L 203); *'Now this is where the extra paperwork comes from because they want... every time you support a child you must write it down... now you think, you're calling this little group, now you must run quickly... It's unrealistic expectations that these people have...'* (F1C L 240-248); *'I think it's the inconsistency that irritates me...one year we're told, "this is how you do it", then you do it that way then you take it again, and they go, 'Oh no, that's incorrect, you should be doing weekly support.'*" (F1D L 215-217). Support forms are a tool used by the Gauteng Department of Education (GDE) to ensure that educators plan and record support interventions for learners who experience barriers to learning. When district officials are required to approve the retention or referral of learners they scrutinise these forms carefully and base their decision on the degree to which the form presents evidence that the teacher has done all possible to support the learner. Whilst a noble exercise, the reality is that educators have become more focused on how well the form is completed than on actual support of the learner: *'I used to have time to take children aside and give them special attention. I don't do it so well anymore even though now I write it down on a support form.'* (N2 L 240-243) This is a prime example of what Jansen (1998:17) refers to as "disarticulation between what bureaucrats intend and what teachers experience."

Some educators understand that a support form can be valuable in guiding and planning an intervention strategy for a learner in need of support: *'...we did the support form sort of at the end of the term. Now it's a three-weekly thing, but I think we all adapted to that and we found that it's not too bad....because it really started working as a working document where we all sat together and said, we are going to work on this and this...'* (F1C L 226-233). For others it is purely an administrative

task: *'When I was at [previous school] a lot of the admin, especially if it comes to support forms or marks whatever; you just give your mark sheet to the office and back comes a four fifty support form and you just sign it...if he didn't get that [pass requirement] or the outcome then that is the support that the syllabus gives in class and if he didn't get the support then he's underperforming and he's not achieving...'* (I3 L120-125). Support forms are evidently yet another mechanism to ensure that educators are accountable for what they do.

In their investigation around educator workload, Chisholm et al. (2005:xiii) found that valuable instructional time was being eroded by administrative tasks required by the authorities within education departments. This study confirms their findings that the policies which attempt to ensure that teaching and assessment take place actually undermine teaching time by cutting into it. Teachers then use class time to complete administrative tasks (Chisholm et al., 2005:184): *'Every time I start relaxing into my teaching, I'm asked to complete some form or paperwork or moderate someone's books or files or tests (twice). And so the children get ignored for a day because even staying until four or five pm in the afternoon isn't always enough.'* (N2 L240-250). This links closely to the next issue that emerged from the data, regarding demands from district and national offices of the DOE.

#### **4.3.1.3 Official demands**

Demands or expectations from the school and district appear to be pressurising educators, who are particularly frustrated by the perceived demands and lack of planning by the district or Gauteng Department of Education (GDE): *'...we cannot plan effectively – often info/forms are received from the department/district where immediate action is needed – our plans have to be shelved to deal with them, causing a ripple effect for other plans and added stress.'* (N3 L 13-18); *'I think... we seem to spend a lot of time trying to make the district office down the road here happy, instead of concentrating on the discipline, concentrating on teachers' wellbeing.'* (F1D L 345-347); *'They'll give us something the day before it's due and say, "Ok, now you need to complete it." Now everybody's like headless chickens trying to gather information and I have an issue with that; when we should be saying,*

*“No, you gave it to us late, therefore our deadline to you is another week, sorry.”* (F1D L 451-454); *‘...you’ve got to fill in your register and you have to fill in that little form on a Friday. This is now teaching time, now we’ve got to do a thing for the education department.’* (F1C L 184-185); *‘We just accept everything they want from us. We must tell them we can’t cope because most of them haven’t been teachers. They haven’t been in a class, now they come with ideas and we must implement it, but the children won’t get smarter because of all these things we have to do to please them.’* (F1B L 352-356); *‘...I wish someone could turn around and say, “Sorry, we’re not going to do that. Actually enough is enough.”’* (F1D L 349-350), *‘It’s pressure from people who don’t have to do the work themselves. That’s why we get angry.’* (F2A L556-557); *‘The cry in our staffroom is, “Can’t somebody just tell the department? “No”.’* (I2 L513). These educators believe that the school management team has, or should have the power to alleviate the pressure on them by being more assertive regarding demands from the district. Such frustration locates this discussion in a relational discourse that is clearly rooted in a sense of separateness from the district and education department. This ‘us’ and ‘them’ thinking reveals a contempt for the authorities and what educators perceive to be unreasonable demands placed on them by officials in the DoE (now called Department of basic Education (DBE)). The researcher believes that these relational difficulties stem from the strong accountability seeking from the top down, placing enormous pressure on the people at the bottom to deliver. This could be an effective practice if balanced with irreproachable clarity, consistency and support at the lower levels. In the experience of these educators this balance does not presently exist.

#### **4.3.1.4 Coping with diversity**

The rapidly developing global human rights discourse, power and freedom to the disenfranchised and subsequent desegregation, in the context of South Africa, brought people from different cultural and race groups, language, belief systems and abilities into contact with each other in integrated environments. The previously segregated and fragmented education system was transformed into a single, non-discriminatory inclusive system, as described by Van Wyk and Lemmer (2002). The researcher was expecting this to be challenging for educators, but surprisingly found

diversity among staff members to be a more significant challenge than diversity among learners.

Several educators appeared to be experiencing challenges with regard to diversity among themselves: *'...at times I've felt a foreigner in the staffroom, unable to understand the different cultural manners, body language, facial expressions; excluded more pointedly by the language. I'm not sure this process could have been eased any more than it was. We had the advantage of staff lunches, some socialising...'* (N2 L120-127); *'We're working in a very diverse staffroom... very, very diverse... and I'm not even linking that to race alone...majority of us are women and I believe [the principal] is very patriarchal.'* (I2 L170-178); *'What I'm finding is that the diversity in the staffroom... is not managed very well, and this is impacting on interpersonal relationships. I have never worked in such a toxic environment.'* (I2 L137-140); *'We have different characteristics according to our cultures... it seems as if there's a lot of misunderstanding between the teachers... that's one of the things we need to consider as teachers. We must think about culture. It means a lot to a person... it's a way of your lifestyle... how you communicate to other people. And so you find yourself in an area where you don't know; when you do something, there are comments. Now you ask yourself, "Am I doing something wrong?...so we get a little bit confused. Most of the teachers get confused.'* (I4 L92-101); *'For now, I'm not stressed. I was stressed when I came here... because there was a lot of gossip. We do gossip, but I found it extreme here, and... at that time, my principal was not supportive enough.'* (I4 L191-195). The use of frequently unspecified pronouns ('we', 'I', 'your'), hint at the presence of cultural or racial identity discourses at play among staff members. Who are 'We' who do not gossip, or "We" who had the advantage of staff lunches and some socialising?

Gender issues exist, as evidenced by an observation that the principal was patriarchal and the majority of staff members female. A male participant made reference to the "feminine influence" in the school, impacting the boys' competition and performance (See 4.3.1.4, par 10). Educators' perceptions regarding diversity and their own cultural and gender identity may be impacting on the way in which they function together as a group. Based on Lewin's (1952) group dynamic theory, it is necessary for a group to experience interdependence of fate and task

interdependence in order to become a dynamic and effective group, working towards a common goal.

With regard to learner diversity, some educators acknowledged the challenge in meeting the needs of learners from diverse racial, cultural, religious and language groups: *'...in our day... only the people in the area attended that school, so you could see to those needs. Now it's so difficult with all the different needs that you have to meet.'* (F1F L 710-712); *'School's don't have the same sense of community – children travel long distances from where they live.'* (N3 L 6-8). These comments may be revealing a social discourse that people have a better understanding than others of the needs of their own communities or ones to which they relate; and that desegregation changed and affected communities as they previously existed.

On teaching learners who are not English first language speakers, one educator said: *'I struggled to help because it was as if they were foreign language students.'* (N2 L10-11); *'Obviously cultural changes; specifically in the West Rand, being so close to Dobsonville and Soweto. I think a lot of our schools have changed... the demographics... So then dealing with not just one or two cultures in one school, but sometimes six, seven cultures or national languages, and then four or five religions in one class – it could be stressful; without ever taking note of, it is an underlying diversity...which creates different perspectives.'* (I3 L35-42). This participant is commenting on the migration of learners from township to suburban schools following the desegregation of schools. Educators appeared to be concerned that they were not able to meet learners' needs adequately, either because they did not understand them or because their differences prevented it. Meier, in Van Wyk and Lemmer (2002:153), comments on the impact of this on educators as they would have to seek new approaches to manage the diversity of learners effectively.

Diversity with regard to the inclusion of learners who experience barriers to learning is discussed under educators' feelings regarding the schools transition from mainstream to full service school (see 4.3.1.7).

Socio-economic diversity emerged as an interesting point with educators observing the differences between wealthier and less affluent children: *'A book by Malcolm Gladwell says the difference between wealthy families and those who are*

*economically impoverished as regards educational progress, is that the richer children put in more hours, and the hours count. IQ [Intelligence Quotient] is the same but sheer time spent learning is different. So the rich get ahead and the poor don't.*' (N2 L283-291); *'I dunno if it's a direct result of how learners are looking or that because they're not looking after themselves we don't look after the buildings anymore... you can go to the Northern suburbs and you won't find that... maybe the demographic is poorer and there is less care when people are having to run around focusing on money more hours of the day so they've got less hours to invest in their children to help them to look and feel good about themselves.'* (I3 L50-55). Hugo (2010) recognised this anomaly between middle class and poor children and their responses to a progressive curriculum, such as South Africa's. He believed that progressivism in curriculum development idealised learners, teachers and classrooms, obscuring the difficulty of the process, and that middle class children with a strong family pedagogy would cope better with the obscurities of a curriculum full of hidden expectations than would poor children from impoverished homes.

The researcher was particularly fascinated by the observation that poor children are not hyperactive: *'I moved a lot and ... I was in a poor school, a rural school (taught there before moving to Gauteng) ...and in that area I was dealing with things like poverty, trauma, learners who were exposed to sex abuse... most of the learners were mentally challenged...When I arrived here, things were more severe... the ADD [Attention Deficit Disorder] was more than where I was from... you know a poor child can't be hyper, he's always tired and so for me it was a challenge...it was taxing for me... these ones were hyper, most of them in class.'* (I4 L142-169).

Differing perspectives of educators from different previous dispensation education departments, cultural and racial groups, and genders emerged as issues were debated and discussed by the participants. These included what educators had apparently missed from the past or appeared to have been lost in transformation. It also included comparisons they made between the school at which they worked and other ones. These differences were particularly evident in some of the following areas:

While increasing class sizes were a problem for many participants, there were different perspectives depending on educators' own educational background: *'I think*



*in the beginning when I started... we only had twenty eight, twenty five in a class. This was only two years before nineteen ninety four, and then in nineteen ninety four they changed the ratio to one to thirty six, I think, and that's when the trouble started... and then it was even worse when it came to forty, then you couldn't see your weak ones anymore.'* (F1F L111-116); *'...most impacted by... increasing class size in the classrooms.'* (N1 L 5-8); *'The number of kids in a class was not too much of a problem for me; coming from my matric class, we were sixty eight in the classroom.'* (I1 L143-145). One of the reasons for the DoE's "teacher rationalisation" process in 1996-97, was to equalise learner: teacher ratios among all schools. (OECD Report, 2009:294). Class size revision was one of the focus areas of curriculum reform because, as evidenced by these comments from participants, class size (referring to the number of learners in a class) was not consistent across the previous education departments. Class sizes were larger in 'Coloured' and 'Indian' classes than in 'White' classes, and largest in 'Black' classes because fewer teachers were allocated to more children. In 1997, a ratio of 40:1 in primary schools was introduced, to be consistent across all provinces and schools.

More disparities in the old dispensation become evident as educators from the former privileged education department appeared to be more aware of deterioration, lack of resources and shortcomings. Perhaps they were accustomed to better facilities, services and resources: *'The general feeling of care and warmth is driven out of schools in this area because of a lack of maintenance, upkeep of equipment and general cleanliness. It starts with desks and chairs that are falling apart, dirty windows, faulty electric outlets...'* (N5 L2-7); *'It's difficult to enjoy spending my whole day in a classroom that looks tatty. Both teacher's desk and learners' desks have probably been in the school for thirty or more years.'* (N2 L134-141); *'I remember when I was at school there was a company that came by and they sanded down every gutter or wall or roof and repainted it. It hasn't been done at this school, [neighbouring schools]. I really think in this area there is nobody from district level supporting these sort of initiatives of revamping a school; and letting it look good for the next twenty years, since it is so well used... a thousand kids in each school, there should be some...'* (I3 L66-73); *'When I started teaching learners were more neat on themselves, the school grounds were kept neat, the facilities at most schools were tiptop...Nowadays, when you enter a school for a government meeting or training or*

*even our own school some days, you feel like ...can nobody do maintenance anymore? I think the whole state of the school have [sic] gotten more dilapidated and that makes learners also not to take pride in themselves'* (I3 L21-27). The political discourse operating in this text has been commented on in 4.3.1.1 (par 9), with regard to the perception that there has been deterioration in many facets of the country, attributable to the perceived lack of skills and competence of the present government to manage and govern the country optimally. Educators from the previously disadvantaged education departments, by contrast, are more appreciative of the resources and facilities to which they now have access: *'Where I come from it's a luxury, having those three or four secretaries, a fax machine, so I have learnt to wait... I'm in heaven there in that office, it doesn't matter how long I wait for something. There's fax machine, I can use the phone..., there is a cell phone; something I never had in all my teaching.'* (F2F L949/10, 958-960); *'...we have it better than most of the township people.'* (F1F L128).

Disparities persist with regard to resources and administrative support at schools within the same district, particularly with regard to administrative support and provision of resources: *'When I was at [previous school] a lot of the admin, especially if it comes to support forms or marks whatever; you just give your mark sheet to the office and back comes a...support form and you just sign it...'* (I3 L120-125); *'Ja, for us, we're used to schools that have even more. The Afrikaans schools have even more.'* (F2D L956/7). This is probably because former privileged schools still have more financial resources, parents who can afford to pay school fees and systems that functionally support educators.

Educators used their previous experiences at other schools as frames of reference by which to measure their current context, and compared their context with what they observed or perceived to be happening at other schools at present: *'...look at a school we went to [visited another school for a meeting]. There were [sic] a Grade R, grade one, two and three class coming into the hall... not one child came without their cap. ...if it was [school being studied] three or four kids in every group would not have had a hat on and what would've been done about it? Nothing! Nothing would've been done about it, but something gets done there one way or the other because those kids did not step out of line...and they were lively kids, they were normal.'* (F1C

L335-344). This comment relates equally to 4.3.3.2, regarding educators' frustration around discipline issues, and specifically how they do not always feel supported by the SMT in this regard.

As an example of one such comparison between the present and the past, a participant observed that learners at this school no longer enjoyed outings or tours as they had before, because of the bureaucracy and challenges involved in arranging them: *'Outings have become fewer. Tours have stopped. Funding, policy of non-exclusion and, this year, the detail required when completing forms for the department has made it unpleasant to arrange outings.'* (N2 L142-146). What is not explicitly stated, however, is that the socio-economic backgrounds of learners have changed. The school previously served a strong middle class community who paid school fees and were able to pay for tours and outings. As more learners from impoverished communities enter the school, they often cannot pay fees or for costly outings and tours, but it would be a violation of their human right and insensitive to exclude them, so such events are discouraged. Also in this climate of consent and approval associated with the protection of children, the department of education has a watertight bureaucratic process that needs to be negotiated before learners are allowed to school property for school outings. Learners often benefit from school outings, especially those from impoverished backgrounds. It is lamentable that such learners are prevented, by policy and bureaucracy, from expanding their experiences and life worlds.

Gender diversity, as discussed above, coupled with more existing differences between English and Afrikaans schools, were pertinent issues since there was a feeling that the feminine influence in the school possibly contributed to a shift in focus away from certain activities, for example, the development of sport, as promoted in Afrikaans schools: *'I feel at this school there's a very definite feminine power that's still left even from [previous principal]'s era. There's very little dramatic focus on sports and fitness and health for the boys...like most Afrikaans schools... it's a very low profile... it's just that boys are more confident and proud of themselves when they are performing or they are fit and healthy... and I don't see this happening with the kind of schedule we offer... we're letting the boys down... they gonna lose if they practice half of what another school in the league practices... it's difficult to look*

*at the amount of games that we lose in a league of soccer and think, you know what? There's no way we gonna win unless the culture of the school changes and we say we are going to emphasise it... but the boys are never gonna feel confident like winners if we practice like losers.'* (I3 L83-114). This participant perceives the school's programme and focus areas to be counterproductive in relation to the learners', particularly the boys', holistic development and success.

This participant's further comments allude to perceived changes in priority, a reduction in effort by educators and the promotion of mediocrity: *'...the benefit of it is I don't worry about getting paid overtime. I don't have to sacrifice unnecessary time, so it's a benefit but for the children it's not a benefit because they don't perform as well as say [neighbouring, more 'northern' former model C school] or these schools that practice three, four, five times a week.'* (I3 L91-94). This participant also made a pertinent observation with regard to lack of motivation to exert oneself: *'...because so many things are being done at a low level, I'll just fit in and do things at a lower level of enthusiasm.'* (I3 L267-268). Another participant (see 4.3.4.1) also made reference to the promotion of mediocrity and decreased effort.

#### **4.3.1.5 Assessment**

With regard to assessment the findings of the research confirm the view of Dada, Dipholo, Hoadley, Khembo, Muller and Volmink (2009:8), that an unnecessarily complicated approach to assessment had been introduced with the advent of Curriculum 2005: *'And with all these changes came the different forms of assessment and really, who is fooling who here? When you look at the analysis of the different forms of assessment, the weakest one is your class test where they have to recall information... so we rely on other forms of assessment that came with this various forms of curriculum to make the children pass, and I am lacking in how to do the various forms of assessment because you can't master them all... And if there's a weakness in your method of assessing and teaching, it's going to affect the learner.'* (F2F L101-108); *'There is no time to teach. It's basically, you have to get into your class at the beginning of the term, work out your assessment plan, start on your assessment plan, without having taught those children anything that you expect*

*them to learn for this new term. You go through a section of work and then you assess it. There is no retelling of information. When I come back and ask them, "What is a verb?" They must go back and think really hard about that one lesson that they had and it's unfair.'* (F2B L111-116).

The most recent National Curriculum Statement Grades R – 12 (January 2012) or CAPS (Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements) prescribes a set number of assessment tasks per subject per term. It was evident that educators found this programme overloaded and believed that it further compromised effective learning and teaching: *'We have fourteen assessments for [subject] in term three... Fourteen... that's without exams'* (F2D L228-232); *'My only concern is the nine or so assessments required each term, and that our school has its own term plan that does not permit assessments to take place in week five and week ten of the term, which requires forward planning and juggling... How is it possible that English teachers are expected to assess nine times a term – formally. But Maths teachers only two times a term?'* (N2 L58-64, 335-339). These educators clearly were seeking information and understanding about what they had to do and why. The answers were not in the policy documents, which is all that they had to guide their practice. It may make more sense for educators to have access to policymakers so that they could gain understanding of the principles underpinning the assessment strategy. It is evident then that training and information-sharing around assessment, for example, with these educators, has not been adequate, as found by Coolahan et al. (2009:295) regarding the limitations of a "cascade" model of training.

#### **4.3.1.6 Societal changes including discipline of learners**

Children reflect what is happening in communities and the broader society. The educators who participated in this study commented on the current trends they saw as they engaged with the learners: *'Societal problems – divorce, financial problems, abuse, drinking, crime, trauma all seem to be having a greater impact on children.'* (N3 L 9-12).

Lack of learner discipline and disintegration of discipline have been cited as a cause of potential teacher attrition (HSRC, 2005; OECD Report, 2009). Participants felt

challenged by the deterioration in learner discipline: *'...in the thirteen years... the difference between the discipline of the kids when I started and now is (gesturing 'thumbs down') (F1E L 304-305).* When prompted for possible reasons for this the educators in one focus group unanimously agreed that it had to do with parenting and that the parents did not support educators (see 4.3.3.5).

One participant also felt lack of support from within the school in dealing effectively with learner discipline: *'...at the moment we've got incredibly difficult parents and incredibly difficult children. They're disrupting the classroom, the teacher's in tears all the time because of a child in their classroom and we get told, "Well sort it out." I've got to a point where I don't know how to sort it out – not anymore.'* (F1D L 319-322); *'...walking up those stairs, you are walking into a war zone. You have to know what you are doing.'* (F2D L507/8); *'Discipline has become more difficult – parents and children are very aware of their 'rights', but not the accompanying responsibilities. Many parents appear to be afraid to say "No" to their children and the child is given everything he wants. Often parents cover up for the children and do not allow them to experience the consequences of their actions.'* (N3 L 20-28). It appears that the seeds sown in curriculum change from "fundamental pedagogics, to a new emphasis on rights-based education and the notion of learner centredness", as described by Dada et al. (2009:12), appears to be coming into full bloom as educator authority diminishes in the pervading discourse on learners' rights.

#### **4.3.1.7 Transition from mainstream to full service school**

White Paper 6 presented the vision and implementation plan for the transformation of selected mainstream schools into full service schools, as described in Chapter 2. The vision remains but the implementation plan is proving more difficult, as reflected in the experiences of these educators: *'The idea of a full service school makes sense but it didn't appear to be a plan that had been thought through with a way chartered out, almost as though it was, "...this is our vision, you find a way to do it." Educators' expectation of themselves wasn't realistic – there were not suddenly going to be small classes, teachers' assistants for all, experts on hand.'* (N3 L65-74). This comment relates to Hugo's (2010) notion that the idealism presented in the new

curricula obscured the difficulty and reality of the process: *'I think the process has just come at the wrong time. The accumulative traumas and stresses of ongoing change had not been dealt with and then, an additional burden added... the fact that the path wasn't a well trodden one. Again we are feeling our way, trying this and that. Given paperwork to formalise what we are doing, so much paperwork that hours are lost.'* (N2 L206-216). This comment refers, again, to this mechanism of accountability that ends up compromising effective curriculum delivery. Educators' experience of trauma and stress related to curriculum reform is explicitly expressed in the last comment, and the school's transition from mainstream to full service is perceived as a burden by this participant.

Some educators were annoyed at the lack of consultation in the process of steering their careers in paths they would not otherwise have chosen: *'Please don't misunderstand me here; I'm not heartless, but I have a problem with us being forced to do this where I don't have the talent to work with those special needs children... I object to the fact that they forced us into it, in not asking us how we feel.'* (F1C L 408-413); *'...I agree with you... I didn't study for this... if I wanted to be a special education educator, I would've studied to be one.'* (F1D L 411- 426) The psychological discourse around one's need for self- determination appears to be operating in this thinking, as some educators were seeking autonomy in their professional decisions.

Educators experienced feelings of inadequacy, frustration and guilt around providing the kind of support required in a full service classroom: *'...I am working hard with every single child in my classroom...I don't know how to help certain children (in frustration)...'* (F1C L 420-421); *'...learners with physical disabilities were not to be accommodated because we do have special schools in this country.'* (N1 L 12-13); *"Frustration in that you feel you should be making more difference in a full service school, but can't... I am frustrated that I feel I am not making the difference in assistance to children that I would like to.'* (N3 L 46-49, 83-86); *'All teachers should have inbuilt into their training, modules that deal with teaching foreign language students and remediation... In fact we should even go so far as to expect all teachers to be remediation trained in that this is an ongoing need in the classroom.'* (N2 L12-21). In White paper 6 (DoE, 2001), repeated reference is made, as quoted in

Chapter 2, to the assistance that will be given to educators and schools with regard to capacity building. The educators in this study did not have the optimal benefit of this assistance, because they still felt unprepared for the task of effectively meeting the needs of learners in a full service school. Besides developing their capacity to address barriers to learning and providing for the full range of learning needs, they were grappling with challenges and changes related to keeping up with curriculum and assessment demands. The experience of the researcher is that the DoE did not necessarily have the capacity to assist educators in this regard. The discourse among educators regarding the different skills required to teach learners who experience barriers to learning and learners without any barriers is borne out of sufficient communication and advocacy regarding the school's designation as full service.

There are no significant differences between this school and other schools in the district. The learners represented in a class were typical of any class in any school in the same area, with the exception of two children with mild cerebral palsy and one in a wheelchair who had brittle bone disease. The challenges with regard to learners who experience barriers to learning are not unique to this school, yet educators felt that they had been impacted significantly by this change. The school benefitted from this designation in that classes were smaller than those in surrounding schools; educators were given preference for training programmes; and money, not given to other schools, was made available for additional resources. The researcher is of the opinion that this discourse exists because there is not enough communication and support around the issue of becoming a full service school and misconceptions are allowed to flourish because issues are not debated or explored. More importantly, the feelings experienced by this group of educators may be explained by the view of the OECD team (2009:297):

If a conscientious teacher is faced with a set of objectives for which he/she does not have the capacity, nor is in a position to deliver, the result is likely to be feelings of guilt, inadequacy, low self-esteem, and alienation, or, at best “shallow coping” with the new requirements without any real engagement.

One of the school's current intervention strategies to support learners who experience barriers to learning is the practice of a “pull out” system, by which



learners leave their class for a time to receive the relevant support in either the Learning Support or Therapy Centre. During the discussion in one of the focus groups, a participant suggested that learners rather be streamed according to ability in order to support them more effectively. The following discussion ensued:

*‘Sorry, here, with full inclusion, they will never allow us to do that, They will say that we’re labelling the children. You’re putting them in a box.’ (F1C L 385-386).*

*‘...but the children don’t have to know that.’ (F1A L 388).*

*‘...they already know because we sit reading and they hear [learner in class] reading in front of everyone. He’s more labelled like that.’ (F1E L 389-390).*

Some of the participants felt that pulling children out of class was not the most viable support strategy: *‘I don’t like children leaving my class for the Learning Support Centre. I have so many assessments that they always miss out important information. I don’t yet see an increased benefit. I think the ideal would be to... catch the children in the foundation phase; remediate intensively; come into the Intersen [intermediate and senior] phase classrooms and provide support ‘in situ’. Suggest strategies to teacher and child to deal with the same material the others are dealing with.’ (N2 L263-276); ‘...in class they are more labelled. If the children who’s (sic) going to [learning support teacher] must get up and go and I ask, “who’s in group four?” then they will say, “It’s [learning support teachers]’ children, so they are already labelled in the classroom because they are going out of the classroom.’ (F1A L 392-395).*

Two issues emerged from the following contribution: firstly, that pulling learners out was not an inclusive practice and, secondly, that educators in the intersen phase felt less competent and less supported than their colleagues in the foundation phase: *‘But how does it impact me being one person being split into three, it doesn’t work. The foundation phase if they have their assistant there that day they can utilise that person, in fact our foundation phase can probably be called a full service foundation phase, I cannot sit here and say intersen is a full service intersen. We have a guise of giving support in the learning support centre, which sometimes happens... but it doesn’t help because it’s not happening in class. You’re drawing kids out of class;*

*which is not inclusion actually, it's the opposite of what inclusion is; and it's not making an impact on the teaching in the class because I'm one person, sitting with thirty four to thirty five kids.'* (F2C L638-647).

Very interestingly, as mentioned previously, this school is relatively well resourced, but it appears that some resources are under-utilised. This raises the question of whether it is, in fact, a lack of resources that prevent educators from supporting learners effectively, or if there are other critical factors at play: *'I am frustrated at the thousands of rands worth of equipment that hasn't been touched and that could be making a difference'* (N3 L 87-90).

Specific learning support approaches and strategies were not covered in the literature review. Subsequent reading and investigation, however, reveals that judgment on the subject of inclusion has not yet been made. The global human rights and economic discourse propel education systems in the direction of inclusion of learners who experience barriers to learning in mainstream classes. As more research is being conducted in the field it may be debated that inclusion is the best alternative for many learners. Research conducted in South Africa by Pillay and Di Terlizzi (2009), as described in 2.4.1, found that a learner with learning difficulties who moved from a mainstream school environment to a school for learners with special education needs (LSEN) benefited on psychological, social and academic levels from placement within the LSEN environment. The inclusion of all learners may be more economically viable (UNESCO, 2009), but the cost of inappropriate school placement on the life of a child may not yet have been factored in. The argument in favour of inclusion is compelling and believable, and the practice is successful in schools and countries that have the resources to make it work. This is, however, not necessarily the case in all South African schools.

#### **4.3.1.8        *Changes in school management***

Whilst Carl (2009:217) urges educators to become empowered he does concede that the climate within the school and the leadership approach of the principal will be determinative in the role that the educator is enabled to fulfil. With regard to the

different principals and subsequent changes in management, some educators regarded changes positively and did not feel impacted by it: *'...least impacted by the appointment of the new school leaders and school governing body... has promoted the rights and responsibilities of parents and educators.'* (N1 L 9-11). Perceptions of the current school management, however, ranged from positivity to a sense that the team lacked unity of purpose: *"from outside of the SMT it seems like they are pulling for different priorities and goals. There is distrust amongst them and a sense of each one covering his [sic] own back.'* (N5 L 8-12).

While some educators were negatively impacted by the differences in management style others appreciated the change: *'I like that [principal] teaches. It makes me feel he's part of the team and at least has some real experience... I like what [he] has done in trying to enforce protocol. Go through the grade head, HOD, Deputy, Principal. It has frustrated me, but I am seeing the benefits. It empowers more as it is used. It can make things run more smoothly. The right people know what's necessary.'* (N2 L360-369).

This management style did not appeal to everyone: *'...the first female principal we had... she followed the modern management style or leadership principles of having a flat hierarchy. And she would give you a responsibility and allow you to own it... to run and to flourish with it...; when [the new principal] arrived, he immediately implemented a very vertical hierarchy... every time I talked to him it would be a case of, "have you talked to your supervisor?"* (I2 L271-314); *'I was an empowered decision maker. I was a full participant, and I could understand what was happening... I do not do well under circumstances where there is this constant threat of, "there are going to be negative consequences.'* (I2 L271-314). Interpersonal relationships among staff members, as described above, are not optimal and impact on the group dynamics aspired to in Lewinian terms.

#### **4.3.2 Theme 2: Educators' current feelings towards their profession**

In the present system of education, the delivery of a curriculum is significantly dependent on educators to facilitate the process. The question of teacher attitudes and feelings towards their profession therefore becomes important because it may

determine how an educator performs in that role. The teaching profession continues to be an area of controversy and debate as educators periodically tip the scale at both ends on the continuum of professionalism. The UNESCO Policy Guideline on Inclusion (2009) offers an example of the attitudes that educators are expected to have. It states that educators must have a positive attitude to inclusion. In the face of all the changes that educators continually experience, the researcher wonders how such an attitude is developed and maintained. As a starting point, however, one of the aims of this research was to determine the current feelings of educators who participated in the study towards their profession.

#### **4.3.2.1 Educators' perceptions of the reasons for changes in education**

Responses to the question of whether changes made sense or whether participants understand why they had been made yielded the following responses: *'I think changes have been made with a focus on doing things better. Obviously not all change has the desired outcome and mistakes get made...'* (N2 L174-177); *'The change from RNCS to NCS, till today I don't know what was the difference between them...did we need to give up a few days of our holiday to go for training that there's no more...specific outcomes?'* (I1 L72-80); *'...honestly speaking...now it is going to get political because I feel that somewhere, someone higher up there had made a mistake. So instead of saying... we made a mistake, let's relook at this... they tried to sugar coat things to try and change, but still remain with the same thing.'* (I1 L89-93); *'I quite enjoyed it [curriculum change]... it's only years later... that one year where we had to go for that week of training at JCE that I actually realised... although I was excited about the whole changeover... that OBE was actually about social engineering... it was a social sort of philosophy, almost linking it to a socialist approach... and that started to worry me because, what about the child?'* (I2 L68-78).

Educators were aware of the political nature of changes in education, possibly acknowledging Jansen's (1998:1) assertions that curriculum reform has been more about a political response to apartheid schooling than with the modalities of change at classroom level. The following quotation is lengthy but pertinent to a developing discourse about what has been termed 'change for the sake of change', 'fixing what

is not broken' or, even more colloquially, 'throwing the baby out with the bathwater': *'Why was TED so bad that it had to be scrapped off? Why was TED not used as a system of education because it produced the academics? A child in South Africa could go anywhere in the world and still be a good student without any struggle... the qualifications in South Africa was world-recognised. So all the changes, I find that they are more of a political nature or more about politics than about the child in the classroom... of the nineteen education departments the main ones were Bantu education and TED... TED had the results... produced the necessary outcomes. Now Bantu education, some of the things were hidden... black people were not supposed to know... that's not their place. You don't have to prepare them for the world out there. Now it wouldn't have been a difficult thing, in my view, to say... which one has worked best and then you can work on that one. Instead of trying to come up with something that is foreign to our country and say that it's going to benefit the child in the township. Outcomes based education still had more advantage for the child in the suburb or in the former model C school. It didn't do much for the child in the township.'* (I1 L102-133). Of interest about the previous comment is that it was not made by someone who was a product of the TED. The researcher has the sense that this participant felt cheated then, and felt that people in townships were still cheated because the opportunity to achieve and excel through education was still not attainable for the majority of South African children.

The political discourse that people appointed into senior positions are not necessarily the best qualified for the job arose: *'I feel that the wrong people are in education, we don't have the right people... every big appointment, in your higher positions, they're actually political.'* (I1 L182-184); *'...it's horrible to redo files every two years. It's horrible to watch people in the department tell me how to do my job when I'm better at being in the classroom than they are. However, I'm not able to play the political game... that's the big change that doesn't make sense to me. Why is it all about who you know, still, about the right contacts and name dropping and skin colour?...another thing that doesn't make sense is... how is it that so much transformation has been made, but 'Black' schools still have vandalised classrooms, teachers who don't teach or work? Is it all about numbers? Funding? Having difficulty establishing themselves whereas we have an established history that eases the ongoing passage?'* (N2 L174-188, 196-204); *'If you look at how many academics*

*were against having Curriculum Two thousand and five, as a system of education in South Africa; not that it wouldn't have worked, but they felt that the field was not level, for it to be a curriculum for every child in South Africa. So one of the ways was to level the field, then you can have an outcomes based education.'* (I1 L95-98). The preceding comments are rich in several discourses permeating South African thinking, and confront existing conditions. The comment that all of the higher positions are political may allude to the discourse that arose from the practice of affirmative action, whereby previously disadvantaged people are employed or promoted more on the basis of their disadvantage, political or nepotistic connections than on their competence.

Whilst the practice of affirmative action is both rational and necessary to address the inequality legitimised by the previous government, it does reinforce the discourse that the person who is appointed into a position is not necessarily the most competent to execute the task. This has moved from a criticism of individuals to a collective scepticism of all government departments as representative of a 'previously disadvantaged' government. These perceptions are reinforced by media reports and a general feeling that deterioration, mismanagement and lack of skills characterise governance in South Africa. Of great concern is the enduring inequality that continues to ravage the country's education system, as the 'haves' swim and the 'have not's' sink (Hugo, 2010). Clearly, the transformation of education towards equity, redress of past inequalities, access to education and quality education as referred to by Lemmer (2002:23) and Moyo (2002:18) is still an elusive ideal, in that there is still much disparity between suburban, township and rural schools. In their report, the OECD Review committee, (2009:296) had asserted that

...a dangerous and misleading policy assumption was being made that the policy could be implemented on a universal basis. The on-the-ground conditions of schools varied enormously throughout South Africa, as they still do, from elite, well equipped schools to mud cabins without heat, water, electricity, or proper blackboards.

In line with the previous discussion, but less political and more didactic is the view held by some educators that the children benefited more from old methods of

teaching, with regard to mastering concepts and achieving outcomes: *'Whereas for me, with the old dispensation, the drilling system worked. We had times tables every morning, our kids knew our times tables. I mean we still know our times-tables.'* (F2B L116-119). This comment is apposite to the view of Dada, Dipholo, Hoadley, Khembo, Muller and Volmink (2009), that apartheid had emphasised rote learning and that educators were not necessarily prepared for the constructivist approach of the new curriculum: *'I have tried what they wanted, and then in all honesty I then carried on teaching the way I have always done.'* (F1C L 42-43). This educator, incidentally, had a reputation for being effective because most learners left her class having acquired the skills required for her grade.

#### **4.3.2.2 Low morale**

The low morale among the educators who participated in the study was almost tangible. Intermittently there would be a burst of positivity, but generally the mood was low: *'I just seem to be drowning.'* (F1E L 164); *'I'm drowning as well.'* (F1D L 165); *'...five years ago I could say I have a life. Now school is my life'* (F1C L 167-171); *'At the moment I feel overwhelmed in this profession.'* (N1 L18); *'I'm very, very close to resigning. If I didn't need the money, I'd stop working.'* (F1E L 512); *'...and it's making teachers' burn out. I can tell you right now, this year I wanted to quit... I can't deal with this workload anymore. I can't. I can't take the abuse from parents.'* (F1D L 514-515); *'I am very disheartened in the profession, because I think we as educators are really run down, we are burnt out.'* (F2E L842-843); *'I teach now, that's the only life I have.'* (F2C L561); *'You don't have time to read a nice book.'* (F2E L566); *'My current feelings towards my profession as an educator is that I'm happy with my work but I feel it has been too long and wish to do something different. The workload is frustrating and toxic. The learners do not want to learn and they don't listen. I'm tired of seeing more assessments which are nothing but more pieces of paper.'* (N1 L 17-20). *'Although I have lost confidence in myself and the education system, I believe that educators who care are still making a huge, positive difference in children's lives. It's a pity the negative press attributed to a few bad, abusive, lazy educators tars everyone with the same brush.'* (N3 L 95-96); *'...exhaustion, but humanly – optimistic. Every single day that I work with CAPS, I learn to make it work*

*for me... (N2 L390-393); 'I feel I've hit the ceiling... I'm now saturated... I feel it's not my place anymore... Is it the school or the system? I feel I still have a lot to offer the children at this school...I don't enjoy teaching as much as I used to... I still love the interaction with the kids...one of the things that frustrates me is how the education in South Africa is run.'* (I1 L245-273); *'I'm tired...I think, because change hasn't been managed properly, teachers are tired and they are angry.'* (I2 L501-502); *'...most impacted by the escalation in the number of meetings after school and the workload and the increasing pressure to do more in less time and to meet a greater range of targets.* (N1 L 5-8).

These educators sounded tired, experiencing mental fatigue, described by Guglielmi, Panari and Simbula (EJMH 7:2, 2012:207) as occurring when "...high job demands exhaust mental resources and therefore lead to the mental fatigue that has a negative impact on teachers' well being and work satisfaction." It also calls to mind the descriptions of Evans (1996:28) that significant change causes a sense of loss and bereavement; Fullan (2001:30) that change involves feelings of loss, anxiety and struggle; and the OECD team (2009:297) that educators' negative feelings may be attributed to not having the capacity to deliver on a set of objectives prescribed by policy. This may be an area of further investigation for this group of educators.

#### **4.3.2.3 Low remuneration versus effort and time spent working**

The financial implication of educators' remuneration appears to be particularly severe for single parents and husbands, given society's expectation that they have to bring in sufficient incomes to support and sustain their families: *'...but, I am tired. And if I'm working this hard I'd like to benefit financially. Why should I earn less than my family members? Why should I devote sixteen hours a day to doing my best for someone else's children when I can't afford to buy my own child what he needs?'* (N2 L405-411), *'It's starting to hit home that I'm not bringing in as much as I'm supposed to as a husband.'* (I1 L266-267). The HSRC report (2005) on potential attrition in education found relatively low salaries to be another contributory factor to educators exiting the profession.



#### **4.3.2.4 Occupational satisfaction**

The first role of an educator, according to the norms and standards for educators (DoE, 2000), is to be a mediator of learning. Several educators enjoy this core responsibility, which is to teach the children, if only they could be relieved of some of the administrative tasks and 'paperwork': *'...interestingly enough, if it was for the classroom, the teaching where I'm not a grade head, I'm a teacher and I can just do normal paperwork like we did five, ten years ago... then I will never go. I'll even work for less money because I love what I'm doing there'* (pointing towards her classroom). (F1C L 734-739); *'I think there's hope... if everyone works as hard as most of us at [name of this school] do, there's hope for the future.'* (N2 L421-423); *'I love my job...if I could spend my whole day in my class, I would be the happiest person around.'* (F2A L985, 987/8).

### **4.3.3 Theme 3: Educators' perceptions of support received from other stakeholders**

The role of the educator in a South African classroom is of critical importance, when one views them as the implementers of a curriculum that aspires to meet the needs of the nation and achieve the criteria described by Dada, Dipholo, Hoadley, Khembo, Muller and Volmink (2009:11) in chapter 2. The challenges experienced by educators are well documented (Reports of Review Committees, 2004, 2005 & 2009; Eloff & Kgwethe, 2007; Ladbrook, 2009; Lessing & De Witt, 2010; Nel, 2007, 2011). It is, therefore, reasonable to expect that educators would need support in the execution of their role and function. This study sought to determine the degree to which educators, at the school chosen for this study, felt supported by other stakeholders within their school community. The data collected revealed the following:

#### **4.3.3.1 Colleagues**

Some educators felt supported by their colleagues, more so than by any other stakeholders: *'...we help each other out as teachers (F2F L156); '... the support you get here, regardless of CAPS and all those other curriculum changes, it makes teaching worthwhile when you have teamwork which I find here... There's a lot of support' (F2F L330-332); 'We share resources.'* (F1A L 600), *'with the majority I feel supported. I would say, the staff is really nice – I mean, ever since I started here – it has changed a little bit – but ever since I've started here I've been raving about the atmosphere of the staff. You know, I mean, you don't know people personally and yet you like each other, you know, or sometimes you step on each other's toes but at the end of the day you like that person and you feel you can talk to them, you know, that kind of thing.'* (F1C L 623-628). This has direct bearing on Kurt Lewin's group dynamic theory, that when people in a group believe that they are all responsible for accomplishing the task and they are all affected by the outcome, they are inclined to contribute more effectively to the group.

The discussion and data presented under educator diversity (see 4.3.1.4), however, appears to weigh more heavily on professional relationships at the school. Some educators felt different from each other and had difficulty establishing a common identity, thus compromising an effective group dynamic.

There were also educators who felt a strong sense of frustration with colleagues who were not viewed as putting in sufficient effort to support or contribute to the team effort: *'You will always find the 'slackers' [people who do not pull their weight], even here you get people who don't do anything' (F2A L287-288); '...I acknowledge that as a whole school we have some 'slackers', there are grades where there are 'slackers', but there are also grades that are functioning optimally and we work well together because everyone pulls their weight.'* (F2C L387-390); *'...but besides pull your weight, I think it has a lot to do with attitude, like our grade, everybody does what they are supposed to do. That's because everyone has integrity. They know, "my marks need to be done, so they do their business, but some people have no conscience and they actually just don't care, like, "What 'ch you gonna do?" (F2A L395-398).*

There was a sense that not all educators took responsibility for their own development and used ignorance as an excuse: *'I just want to say, the cop out story,*

*with teachers saying, “I didn’t know”... When are you going to take responsibility? Teachers walk into the school and they can see okay, this is totally different, I need to work here. So why do I still have an issue with, “but you didn’t do this...and that?”...and it’s two or three years down the line and you say, “I didn’t know.” What do we do about things like that? That also frustrates so deeply. That you feel like you want to want to take your bag and go.’ (F2B L313-318). This comment alludes to the differences in school environments, as this appears to be an environment where there are high expectations of educators and they have to perform to a certain standard. There were more complaints about colleagues who do not make a positive contribution to the team: ‘...educators who do very little, have a ‘job’, abuse leave, don’t fulfil their obligations timeously are a great source of stress and frustration.’ (N3 L 36-40); ‘I find some teachers are not good at working quickly and juggling. This is frustrating as sooner or later things come unstuck: work hasn’t been assessed, mark books are empty, class averages are too low. ...Sometimes I feel as if I’m dragging teachers along when they feel more comfortable taking things at a slower pace...and that’s possibly a problem I’ve experienced with the constant change – not everyone changes.’ (N2 L65-77). These comments reinforce the emerging evidence that the current group dynamic in this school was not optimal, and that Lewin’s (1952) key elements for effective groups, namely interdependence of fate and task interdependence, are present in some subgroups (grades) but absent from the group as a whole.*

#### **4.3.3.2 The School Management Team (SMT)**

Educators who are not members of the school management team (SMT) expressed frustration at certain practices and situations in the school, sometimes caused or allowed by the school management: ‘*You know what else, I feel, is putting stress on me? You plan your day... you come with all your hopes into the school, your energy, and you know this is how I’m going to handle [the learner], this is how I’m gonna do that. And then things in the school changes [sic] your plans and everything is totally out of hand... the class is chaos, the children’s chaos. You plan your day... and then they say, “Concert practice the whole day.” (F2D L422-426, 436-438); ‘They want to know about how many ADD [Attention Deficit Disorder] children there are in the class*

*or in the grade. Now, all of a sudden stop our work, "How many of you have ADD? How many of you have one parent or two?" It's that business that I cannot take.'* (F2A L429-432); *'What this school needs the most is an SMT [school management team] that can plan ahead. If I knew on Monday that on Wednesday this is happening, and Thursday this is happening and next Tuesday this is happening then I would know... I must do a more fun activity. I can't do at test or an assessment or word problems.'* (F2A L482-487); *'...most impacted by the escalation in the number of meetings after school and the workload and the increasing pressure to do more in less time and to meet a greater range of targets.'* (N1 L 5-8); *'... we have too many meetings.'* (F1C L 662).

Another sentiment expressed above (see 4.3.1.7 par 6), regarding the anomalies in the management of and support available to the different phases in the school, namely, foundation, intermediary and senior or intersen, as it is called, recurs: *'...so much appears to have been done for the Foundation Phase but the Intersen Phase still feels neglected, for example, the assistants in class; the last week of each term teachers leave their classrooms to plan the next term; when teachers come in during the holidays on a specified day for planning and this is a Section thirty eight day (Section 38A is a form on which educators fill in any work done or time spent over and above what is required, in order to qualify for additional remuneration) ...None of this is done for the Intersen Phase and would indeed help me feel more supported.'* (N2 L376-388); *It seems that the older children don't receive as many comforts as the younger ones.'* (N2 L139-141). One of the reasons for this difference may be that Foundation Phase educators have one class and three subjects to manage, whilst intersen educators are engaged with several classes across several subjects at a time. It may also be true that more energy is devoted to engaging with and supporting educators in the Foundation Phase.

As discussed previously (see 4.3.1.6), educators are frustrated with discipline issues: *'...I think it's also a lack of support in certain areas in this school. It's not everybody, but from certain areas where you want somebody to back you up... you'll have one person back you up and then you'll have the person above that person not supporting you.'* (F1D L313317). The comment made above (see 4.3.1.4 par 12) regarding the comparison in discipline of learners from another school to learners in

this school is also relevant here. An aspersion is cast, that in this school, nobody compelled learners to comply with school regulations.

Some educators who were also members of the SMT responded: *'Working with a different management structure has been challenging as educators expectations have been difficult to meet as I often am unaware of situations happening until the educators inform me. Feeling uninformed has also affected my confidence in my ability to do my job at the level I expect of myself.'* (N3 L 75-82); *'In my professional life, I have been made to feel incompetent whether I work or not. I've got to find my equilibrium, I'm happy to accept that is what I've got to do; but the result is that I'm unmotivated, I battle to get to school and to the meetings on time. I have been made to feel incompetent, I have been made to feel insignificant.'* (I2 L479-484); *'We've actually become toothless HODs. We have been absolutely disenfranchised, we've been disempowered. Our credibility is also shot because they [educators] know, coming to us is not going to make a difference; so people will come and vent, that's all they do, all we can help them with. We're actually powerless.'* (I2 L463-467). A participant made the assertion that the SMT lacked unity of purpose (see 4.3.1.8 par 1), as confirmed by members of that team.

#### **4.3.3.3 The School Governing Body (SGB)**

Two participants mentioned the school governing body (SGB), one alluding to its role in creating opportunities for educators to be developed, and the second to the acrimonious relations that developed between the previous principal and some of the former members: *'...it was nasty. There was, I think, definite friction between the principal of that time and one or two governing body members'* (I2 L208-210).

#### **4.3.3.4 District officials, provincial and national education departments**

The majority of participants did not feel supported by the district or the national education department. Participants revealed low levels of confidence in the competence of their seniors in district and provincial department posts, as discussed

above: *'The department [district and GDE] doesn't support us in our tests. They talk to us about differentiation, but they don't differentiate at all. They themselves are clueless as to what this entails.'* (F2F L613/4). This comment was made in reference to the difficulties faced by educators in a full service school, for example, the curriculum could be adapted to support learners, but assessment might not be adapted. Learners were sometimes taught differently, but assessed in a similar way: *'...it felt like I didn't know where to go, whereas in the past you knew, you just knew where to go.'* (F1C L 45-46).

In discussing the difficulties in implementing the new curriculum, some educators felt that, as implementers of it, their opinion was not sought and so they had to implement ideas that were theoretically sound but more difficult in practice: *'...but they don't think of asking the teachers' input. They're sitting in offices and it works on paper, but getting down to practical, it's like, really? How must we marry this stuff?'* (F2B L142-144); *'Educators are often not given credit for their professionalism, e.g., after having taught a child for a year, all your concerns for a child's future can be brushed aside by a district official who "doesn't want to fight with a parent"....'* (N3 L 29-35). The sentiments expressed here echo those expressed under official demands (see 4.3.1.3), in reference to saying, "No" to the department [district]. This perceived relational distance between school and district cannot be conducive to effective and supportive collaboration within this educational ecosystem.

This inadequate planning on the part of the DoE and district extends to the supply and ordering of resources: *'...we had to order our textbooks at the end of last year, but we didn't have time to go through and see properly what best suited CAPS. We had spent a week in the July holidays on training, but you know nothing because you haven't practiced the curriculum in class. We ordered a textbook that is absolutely useless because the department [DBE] has said its CAPS approved... and it's not'* (F2C L162-168).

#### **4.3.3.5 Parents**

The majority of participants felt that educators were not sufficiently supported by parents: *'I find it difficult that parents encourage their children to stand up to*

*teachers, to speak as if teachers were their equals. I find it difficult that many parents talk disrespectfully about teachers in front of their children and so we have no status... that parents can arrive at meetings smelling of alcohol and clearly not fully in charge of themselves. I find it difficult to gauge when parents are lying... that so many families are so disorganised that it impacts on the way their children function.'* (N2 L86-101); *'I think a lot of parents have taken a step back with regard to the discipline of their children... and it's expected by society that the school and the teachers as a group enforce that... the balance at this school is not right yet'* (I3 L195/6).

There was also a strong feeling that parents need support and guidance, which educators or the school can provide *'...we as educators need to walk a closer walk with our parents in the support their kids need in terms of holistic development, homework, study time, maybe even a discipline liaison officer'* (N5 L13 -17); *'They need to promote positive interaction with the parents or caregivers. They need to be invited to school and encouraged to participate in the classes through sharing their knowledge and supporting their children and other learners in our classrooms. They can also provide information about their children that can help us in assessing their needs. Family support groups'* (N1 L 21-25); *'We should have parents' information and parents needing to be taught. There's lots of parents that's in need of support or education on how their children need to be taught. I think they are not taking responsibility and they don't know how'* (I3 L199-202).

One educator felt that parents had been and were being supported: *'Parents have been supported, talks given, meetings held, systems like the merit book put in place. More and more effort is made to draw the community in. I think it's just an ongoing process.'* (N2 L108-112). Relational difficulties persist, this time between educators and parents, as the educational partnership that ideally ought to exist between parents and educators seemed compromised. The concept of effective group dynamics can be applied in this instance also in that it is necessary for educators and parents to have a common goal regarding the education and development of children.

#### **4.3.3.6 Learners**

As quoted in the preceding categories, the researcher found it interesting that the majority of statements made by educators about learners were in reference to how their education and development had been compromised by the education system, curriculum, curriculum change, support and intervention, inadequate parenting and inadequate teaching due to administrative and other demands. The only other references made to learners in the context of support or challenge was with regard to how difficult they had become with regard to discipline and how they appeared to be untidy and unkempt, as quoted above.

#### **4.3.4 Theme 4: Ideas shared by educators regarding their personal input and from other stakeholders to support them in managing the changes more effectively**

The views of Carl (2009:1) discussed in chapter 2, with regard to educator empowerment offer a solution to educators who are experiencing challenges in their role as educators. He recommends that, “A teaching environment within which teaching may occur optimally can only be created through effective empowerment”. The researcher asked participants what they could do or did differently to enable them to cope better with the changes. Their responses were arranged as the following themes.

##### **4.3.4.1 Personal input**

Educators knew what that they could do or did differently to enable them to manage the changes more effectively: *‘Educators need to be flexible, I have learnt. I have had to learn not to take things as personally. I think we needed to have spoken more about our feelings of frustration. I found people were labelled as ‘negative’ if they expressed fears or concerns, which wasn’t always the case.’* (N3 L 57-64); *‘You can’t change some things...you need to change in order to accommodate them. So I decided to change my mind set.’* (I4 L130-132). Some educators also knew what



they needed to stop doing that was destructive to optimal functioning and personal effectiveness: *'I think I need to stop being a sceptic. I've got this thing that they are doing it again, it will not work, or, let's see how far they can take this... and it affects the amount of effort you put in.* (I1 L171-174). This comment relates to the issue of breeding mediocrity as discussed above (see 4.3.1.4).

#### **4.3.4.2        *Input from other stakeholders***

Several educators expressed the need for a strong support network to enable them to develop professionally, to become better at what they did and to be successful in their tasks as educators: *'I need a mentor – someone who's not looking at me to judge me...someone who is there to assist... until I can say, "I'm a master at this.'* (I1 L202-208); *'I would like to be supported by others in sharing and exchanging resources from other schools in order to promote sustainability and development. The leaders should keep on motivating and encouraging finding solutions to meet the challenges.'* (N1 L 14-16); *'We seem to concentrate too much on what government can offer and recently I've realised that I haven't used any of the non-governmental organisations (for support)'* (I1 L192-195). The educators' wish to develop and improve their practice is encouraging because apathy is staved off by their will to change and grow.

In terms of support within the school there was a need expressed regarding the disciplining of errant learners, echoing the challenges described above with regard to learner discipline: *'...there needs to be a support system in the school, not just send the naughty kids to [HOD taking responsibility for discipline], but have a person that has time and have dedication, like most overseas schools have got a community counsellor of some sort that you go to and you sort out stuff; if the kid is looking for attention in class...and we don't have dedicated staff for those purposes'* (I3 L215-219).

There were many needs expressed with regard to support required from the SMT. Several have already been discussed, such as alleviating pressure on educators by being more assertive with the department (district and GDE), who made unreasonable demands on teachers; planning more effectively and with greater

sensitivity to the impact of impromptu decisions on learners and educators in classrooms; and providing equitable support across the phases within the school. Other needs were expressed as follows: *'I would like more time... I'm struggling to keep up with my marking and lesson prep and paperwork and moderating and supporting other teachers... spread the teaching and prep load a bit more.'* (N2 L 300-306); *'I would like to know somebody cares... the personal touch helps.'* (N2 L 309, 315/6).

There was also a need expressed to improve relationships and partnerships between parents and educators: *'To enable me to feel better supported...promote positive interaction with the parents or caregivers. They need to be invited to school and encouraged to participate in the classes through sharing their knowledge and supporting their children and other learners in our classrooms. They can also provide information about their children that can help us in assessing their needs.'* (N1 L21-24); *'I would like more parent support. I understand they're tired but small things help. Take your child to a library. Make it lunch...'* (N2 L296-298). Implied in this comment is a sense that the support that educators want from parents is for their involvement, care, stimulation and interaction with their own children.

Other needs expressed in the data, may be addressed more appropriately at school level when the staff begin to engage around issues that impact their functioning and they can explore their common goals; thus improving interpersonal professional relationships and the dynamics of the group for greater personal and institutional effectiveness.

#### **4.4 CONCLUSION**

The purpose of the research was to explore the experiences of educators in a full service primary school as they experience transformation and continuous occupational related change. In this chapter, the analysis of the data that was collected has been presented. This empirical research was conducted with educators in a full service primary school by means of semi-structured interviews, focus groups and narrative accounts.

Four broad themes were identified and discussed throughout the chapter, namely, changes that have impacted educators most; educators' current feelings towards their profession; educators' perception of support received from other stakeholders; and ideas shared by educators regarding personal input and that from other stakeholders to support them in managing the changes more effectively. Occasional cross referencing of information attests to an overlap in certain cases, between themes and categories that were identified from the data collected.

Educators appear to be tired, overwhelmed, angry and frustrated, among a range of other emotions. They appear to feel unsupported and disregarded, yet they continue to devote much time and energy to the pedagogic tasks for which they are responsible.

Some optimism is justified in that many educators seem to enjoy their core function, which is teaching and interacting with the children. They are, however, tired, many of them feel that they need support and some feel that they need a break from teaching.

Knowledge gaps were identified, such as the dearth in information and support with regard to the successful inclusion of learners who experience barriers to learning in the South African context, where classes are large, the DoE does not pay teaching assistants, and there are not enough paraprofessionals.

Several discourses emerged from the data as discussed under the subsections, including current educational, social, relational and political discourses. These will be revisited and explored more fully in the following chapter, with recommendations and the conclusion of the study.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **SUMMARY, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION**

*"The tragedy is not that things are broken. The tragedy is that they are not mended again."* 1903-1988 Alan Paton, South African author: (AP, 7/7/98)

#### **5.1 INTRODUCTION**

In Chapter 4 the findings, derived from the data collected from 21 participants, were presented. This chapter presents a synthesis of the study by summarising the findings, both from the literature reviewed as well as the empirical research; conclusions that may justifiably be drawn; recommendations for any stakeholders in this school and for further research; limitations of the study; and a conclusion.

#### **5.2 OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY**

The aim of this study was to explore how educators at a full service primary school were experiencing transformation and continuous occupation-related changes. This was not limited to the transition from a mainstream to full service school, but encompassed any changes in the education system in the previous 20 years that may have impacted the research participants.

Answers to the research questions were achieved through a literature review (Chapter 2), as changes in the education system in the previous 20 years were discussed, including a description of the different types of schools as designated by White Paper 6 (2001). Chapter 4 presented findings that emerged from the data collected from the research participants, namely educators at a full service primary school. The changes impacting this group of educators most significantly were discussed, as well as their views on the transition from mainstream to full service school and their profession. The extent to which they felt supported by other stakeholders in the school and broader education system was also presented, as

well as their recommendations for inputs by them personally and by other stakeholders to enable them to manage the changes more effectively.

### **5.3 DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS**

In response to the research question of how educators at a full service primary school are experiencing transformation and continuous occupation-related change, the response is that it is with some difficulty. There are many challenges borne out of changes in policy and curricular demands, as discussed in 4.3.1. Educators who participated in the study felt overwhelmed, inadequate, frustrated and angry. A summary of these findings is presented through the literature reviewed then the empirical research.

#### **5.3.1 Findings from the literature reviewed**

Three particular groups of information were reviewed during the literature study:

1. Kurt Lewin's three phase model of change and group dynamic theory as theoretical frameworks underpinning the study.
2. Changes in the South African education system with regard to transformation in education, curriculum revision, and new approaches to assessment, managing diversity and inclusion, different types of schools according to White Paper 6 (2001), language, religious and cultural diversity.
3. The expected roles of educators as agents of change and the possible impact of change on people in general.

Kurt Lewin's three phase model of change proposes that change can be viewed as a three step process of unfreezing, changing and then refreezing. According to his group dynamic theory, effective groups have fate and task interdependence, which means that people may come to a group with different dispositions, but if they share a common objective, they are likely to act together to achieve it (Smith, 2001).

Several sources were consulted to track the process of change and transformation in the education system in the last 20 years. The educational discourses permeating these changes were gleaned from available literature including a substantial number of reports by local and international review committees; indicating admirable intent on the part of the education ministry to understand and review strengths and weaknesses in the system. The HSRC and ELRC had also commissioned research into the state of education and educators; based on which extensive reports had been written. South African academics and researchers had taken a keen interest in researching and analysing aspects of our education system, including curriculum studies and design, challenges experienced by educators with regard to the practice of inclusion and curriculum delivery. Some researchers looked at supporting roles by districts and HOD's. Reports, comments and recommendations had been made since the late 1990's. Several of these were consulted and their findings are presented below:

According to the literature, findings included acknowledgement that OBE, C2005 and subsequent revisions were hastily adopted and not necessarily the best options in the South African context (Coolahan et al. 2008; Dada et al. 2009; Hoadley, 2011; Hugo, 2010:57). Some academics and researchers predicted that the new curriculum was on a trajectory that would ultimately compromise learners, educators and the system since it was based on flawed assumptions (Jansen, 1997), that it was not necessarily didactically sound (Hugo, 2010) and that educators would have difficulty making a success of the new style of teaching, learning and the new assessment practices (Pretorius, 2002). Review committees found the curriculum to be overloaded (Dada et al. 2009); assessment programmes to be overloaded with too many assessment tasks (OECD Review committee, 2008); ) as well as an increase in educator workload and the erosion of teaching time by administrative tasks (Chisholm et al. 2005).

With regard to inclusion, White Paper 6 (2002) was consulted to understand the different types of schools in an inclusive South African schooling system, with particular focus on full service schools. International policy documents (Unesco, 2009) informed discussion around criteria for effective inclusion of learners who

experience barriers to learning, and local research (Pillay and Di Terlizzi, 2009) offered insight into inclusion debates in the South African context.

Educators play a critical role in ensuring that South African children receive the education they deserve. The expected roles of educators as identified by the South African Norms and Standards for Educators (DoE, 2000) were presented and the challenges facing educators were explored (Jansen, 1998; Chisholm et al. 2005). Hoadley and Jansen (2005:81) advised that it is vital to engage, communicate with, and support educators from the outset in attempting to transform the curriculum.

Several sources were consulted with regard to the general impact of change on people (Ballantine & Hammack, 2012; Evans, 1996; Newstrom & Davis, 1997), whilst the anticipated impact of changes on educators was also explored (Chisholm, 2005; Coolahan et al. 2008; Hoadley, 2011; Hugo, 2010; Jansen, 1997; Ramdass, 2009).

It appears that curriculum revision receives great priority and investment in the country, yet based on the performance of learners; there are clearly critical areas that seem to be obstructing the creation of effective learning environments for all, effective curriculum delivery, successful inclusion of learners who experience barriers to learning and a strong, motivated, happy classroom based workforce.

### **5.3.2 Findings from the empirical research**

The data collected from 21 participants, by means of individual interviews, focus groups and narrative accounts, were resonant with the findings of the literature reviewed. The data was analysed and interpreted according to five steps, namely, familiarisation and immersion, inducing themes, coding, elaboration, interpreting and checking (Terre Blanche et al., 2006:322). Four themes were identified, as summarised and discussed under the respective headings below.

#### **5.3.2.1        *Theme 1: Changes that have impacted educators most***

The education system has been characterised by transformation and change in the last 20 years. This research was interested in exploring the experiences of this group of educators, as objects and agents of that change. The findings revealed the following changes as impacting educators most significantly.

### *Curriculum change*

All participants had been impacted by one or other change in education. Most educators appeared to be exasperated by frequent curriculum changes, particularly because they did not perceive the changes to be in the best interest of the children. On the contrary, they perceive them to be barriers to learning in that the curriculum causes learners to appear to be incapable and they make it difficult for them to acquire skills and achieve assessment standards, corroborating the observation by a review committee (Dada et al., 2009) regarding complaints about children's inability to master age-appropriate reading, writing and counting skills that emerged following the implementation of C2005. Educators were aggrieved that frequent curriculum change prevents them from mastering their subject matter and becoming curriculum specialists, which paradoxically, is one of the roles educators are expected to fulfil (DoE, 2000).

Educators felt overwhelmed by time pressure, curriculum and assessment overload, and insufficient time to consolidate concepts with learners and support or enrich learners as required. They were pressurised to complete their curriculum, and assess and complete the necessary paperwork, as evidence that they were competent. They recognised that their learners were not benefiting from these curriculum and policy demands, yet they felt powerless to change the pace, intensity and amount of work done, even though they were fully aware that the learners were being compromised in the process.

Educators were also frustrated by inconsistency in messages from seniors and education department officials at all levels, illustrating the different interpretation of policy. There is evidence that not all schools were complying with policy, hence inconsistency in implementation within and between schools, districts and provinces, indicating that the national curriculum does not yet enjoy standard implementation. The resources approved for curriculum delivery are inconsistent with regard to



compliance with policy, suggesting that the curriculum is still open to interpretation and therefore defeating the purpose of a unified education system. One participant did acknowledge that, even though every minute of class time had to be used to manage the content, the curriculum was improving and becoming less complex.

#### *Increase in paperwork and administrative tasks*

Educators found the increase in administrative tasks and paperwork daunting, supporting Jansen's (1998:3-9) assertion that OBE would multiply the administrative burden placed on teachers, and the findings of Chisholm et al. (2005:x) that, "The vast majority of educators experience multiple, complex and constantly changing requirements in their teaching and learning contexts as an unbearable increase in workload." Educators complained about having to fill in forms, an increase in the documentation required for each learner and other daily administrative tasks. They were particularly annoyed by the duplication of work, such as daily reports on learner attendance, which, in the view of the researcher, does not serve to decrease or address learner absenteeism in any way. The completion of support forms is seen by some to be a useful tool and by others as merely another administrative task. Educators confirmed the findings of Chisholm (2005) that valuable instructional time is eroded by administrative tasks, linking with an educator's comment that every minute of class time needs to be used to manage curriculum content and another comment by the same participant that at times, when administrative demands are too high, she had to ignore the children for a day in order to complete those tasks (see 4.3.1.2 par 6).

#### *Official demands*

The paperwork and administrative tasks described in the preceding paragraph were in compliance with official demands and requests. Educators demonstrated strong feelings of rebellion against the district and provincial education department (GDE) as the source of unreasonable demands and frustration towards the school management who were not sufficiently assertive to protect them from it.

### *Coping with diversity*

Educator diversity appeared to be a significant issue as referred to by several participants. The desegregation of schools included the integration of educators of different race, culture and language in previously segregated institutions. These educators also came from different disparate education departments under the old regime, further intensifying their differences, frames of reference and ways of doing things. These differences became apparent as educators shared their various perspectives and previous experiences within the former education departments, including factors such as their expectations, class size, resources, facilities and maintenance thereof. These different views bore evidence of the inequality and disparity that characterised the previous dispensation, but more alarmingly, that persist between privileged and less privileged schools.

Gender diversity emerged as an issue as participants made reference to feminine influences countermanding male notions of competitiveness and success in sport, and patriarchal attitudes on a predominantly female staff influencing the dynamics at the school.

Learner diversity was acknowledged as being challenging at times, as educators felt unable to meet the diverse needs of learners from different communities. The school had a weaker sense of community as learners from other communities entered it.

Educators seemed to find it difficult to manage the inclusion of learners who experience barriers to learning. They expressed frustration, feelings of inadequacy and guilt at not being able to meet the needs of these learners effectively.

Interesting observations were made by educators regarding socio-economic diversity, as they discussed their perceptions of the differences between wealthier and less affluent children. These observations were in line with the views of Hugo (2010), that the new, progressive curriculum would benefit middle-class children better than it would poorer ones. Learners also appeared to be disadvantaged by the cessation of co-curricular activities such as tours and outings because of a lack of funding and bureaucracy, among other factors.

An important allusion was made to the reduction in effort borne out of decreased expectations of educators with regard to extramural and other activities, resulting in low levels of enthusiasm and mediocre aspirations.

### *Assessment*

Educators indicated a need to understand assessment practices as required by policy, but there was also evidence that participants did not agree with current practices, such as attention to different forms of assessment. They also support the findings of Chisholm (2005) that assessment programmes are overloaded, with too many tasks required in a subject per term, thus impacting the time in which to teach concepts that need to be assessed and insufficient consolidation of concepts prior to assessment.

### *Societal changes, including discipline of learners*

Educators commented on the prevalent societal problems, such as divorce, financial status, abuse, substance abuse and crime. Trauma was also reported, to which children are increasingly exposed and which they subsequently reflect upon and are impacted by.

With regard to learner discipline, educators commented on the decline in learner discipline and felt challenged by its disintegration, which was similarly found to be a cause of teacher attrition by the HSRC (2005) and the OECD review team (2009). Educators felt that it was becoming increasingly difficult to manage disciplinary issues and that support from within the school relating to them was inadequate. They also held parents responsible for an apparent decline in learner discipline.

### *Transition from mainstream to full service school*

Educators who participated in the study felt apprehensive about the administrative and competency demands now that the school was a full service one. They also experienced implementation difficulties and felt inadequate, frustrated and guilty about not being able to meet the needs of learners in a full service class, thus many felt that they were inadequately prepared or insufficiently skilled to provide the level of support required by many learners. In this regard they also felt that the

intervention strategies in the school were not optimal, particularly in the intersen phase, and that these needed to be reviewed. They objected to the lack of consultation regarding this transition from mainstream to full service school because they were impacted upon directly by a new designation. Some felt strongly that they had not chosen or studied to teach in a full service school, or work with learners with mild to moderate barriers to learning, but that it had been foisted upon them

One participant felt frustrated that thousands of rands had been spent on resources that were not being used to make a difference to learners or to their support. This raises the issue that it is not really a lack of resources preventing these educators from supporting learners successfully, but that other contributory factors should be considered or investigated.

#### *Changes in school management*

Mixed responses emerged as changes in management were experienced positively by some educators and negatively by others. There was a sense that unity of purpose was deficient in the current management. Participants responded differently to the new principal's management style.

#### **5.3.2.2      *Theme 2: Educators' current feelings towards their profession***

The motivation for this research sub-question and consequent aim arose from the researcher's interest in how the thoughts of educators influence their feelings, which in turn determines their behaviour. Furthermore, educators at this school, and others, complain about their work and their profession. The researcher believes that one's execution of a task is determined largely by one's attitude towards it; but more importantly this question would give some insight into the thought patterns and emotional state of this group of educators.

As a starting point educators were asked whether the changes in education made sense to them. Responses ranged from an optimistic view that changes had been made with good intentions, to the view that the decision around curriculum reform was a political mistake, or that someone was trying to "sugar coat" through

curriculum revision. Several educators described changes in education as politically motivated, referring to them as a socialist approach or social engineering, and that they did not necessarily have learners in mind. One participant seemed disappointed that the old Transvaal education department's system had been discarded, because he perceived it to be an effective one that produced the necessary outcomes.

Several educators held the view that learners benefited more from old methods of teaching than those advocated in the new curriculum. This echoes the position of some academics that the hierarchical nature of fundamental pedagogics may be more substantial than progressive pedagogics (Hugo, 2010).

Morale was quite low among educators, and they sounded despondent and tired, citing some of the reasons as workload, abuse from parents, lack of time to do pleasurable things, feelings that they had no life, learners who neither wanted to learn nor listen, excessive numbers of assessments, loss of confidence in self and the education system, negative press attributed to a few bad educators, the way education in South Africa was being run, poor management of change, escalation in the number of meetings after school, and increasing pressure to do more in less time and meet a greater range of targets. Words used by educators to describe their feelings included *'drowning', 'overwhelmed', 'burnt out', 'close to resigning', 'run down', 'disheartened', 'frustrating', 'toxic', 'exhaustion', 'saturated', 'tired' and 'angry'*. Some positive words were: *'happy with my work', 'but it's been too long', 'humanly optimistic'*.

Educators felt that their remuneration was not commensurate with their effort and time spent working. Single parents and husbands, in particular, felt specifically affected by low salaries.

Several educators expressed joy and satisfaction related to their core function of teaching and interacting with learners. They felt that it was the external demands, such as administrative tasks, increased paperwork and additional responsibilities that detracted from their occupational satisfaction and joy.

### **5.3.2.3 Theme 3: Educators' perceptions of support received from other stakeholders**

In the context of the school, stakeholders can be perceived as the people involved in that immediate system, namely, educators, and school management team, school governing body, district, provincial and national department officials, parents and learners. Learners, who hold the greatest stake, did not feature as prominently in stakeholder discussions, yet educators persistently spoke about the curriculum not benefiting the child.

#### *Colleagues*

Several educators acknowledged the support they received from their colleagues, and felt that educators at this school assisted each other and worked together. This stood in opposition to the feelings of those who perceived their diversity to be the cause of feeling excluded, not accepted and criticised by their colleagues. Factors contributing to poor interpersonal relations and diversity included language barriers, cultural differences and gossip.

A group of educators felt particularly frustrated by colleagues whom they consider not to be pulling their weight. They referred to these colleagues as “slackers” and “*dwaarseklers*”, because they were not compliant, did not show integrity with regard to meeting deadlines, had poor attitudes, had no conscience and did not care. They did, however acknowledge that some grades worked very well together as all members pulled their weight, and some grades had less success in working together because of members who did not make positive contributions and affected the group dynamic in the grade. One participant also took issue with colleagues who did not take responsibility for their own development and continued to plead ignorance as they repeatedly made the same errors, even though they had been shown how to do it differently.

#### *School management team (SMT)*

There were certain practices and actions of the school management team that frustrated educators, in that it appeared to thwart their efforts at classroom level. Such practices included impromptu decisions which were not anticipated by

educators, such as changing the plans or times for the day to accommodate co-curricular activities, interruptions during class to collect learner information (statistics), inadequate forward planning, and too many meetings.

Some educators observed that the foundation phase was managed and supported differently from the intersen phase. Much appears to have been done to support Foundation Phase educators, such as providing classroom assistants for them, arranging a planning day during the holidays that could be claimed for in terms of extra remuneration (Section 38A forms) and creating a planning day for Foundation Phase educators during the last week of term. These anomalies between the phases caused educators in the Intermediate Phase to feel neglected and unsupported.

Educators experienced frustration with what they perceived to be lack of support from certain areas within the school with regard to disciplinary issues and errant learners. There was also a perception that learners were more inclined to contravene rules in this school than in more privileged ones, because nobody compelled them to comply with school regulations, particularly relating to uniform.

Some members of the school management team who participated in the study expressed feeling uninformed about situations in the school, and consequently losing confidence in their ability as heads of department; being made to feel incompetent and insignificant; and feeling toothless, disempowered and losing credibility because they knew that they were powerless to make a difference. This links with a perception expressed previously that the SMT lacked unity and a common goal.

#### *School governing body*

Participants did not comment much on the school governing body and they were only briefly referred to, possibly indicating that no real issues currently existed between participants and the SGB.

#### *District officials, provincial and national education departments*

Most participants did not feel supported by the district, the provincial or national departments. They perceived certain officials to be demanding and officious rather than supportive, ascribing this to “cluelessness”, ignorance or incompetence on the

part of the officials. The educators who participated in the study showed little or no confidence in the DoE officials (c.f., the section on official demands, 5.3.2.1).

Educators were frustrated at having to implement policies on which they had not been consulted. Some were frustrated that some policies might look theoretically sound but were not necessarily practicable. Others were frustrated that their professionalism was often disregarded by officials who overrode their concerns and efforts with regard to learners in order to appease parents.

Some educators accused the district and DBE of inadequate planning and monitoring, particularly with regard to approving textbooks that were essentially not CAPS compliant. Educators therefore held the district and national departments responsible for ordering approved textbooks that were not CAPS compliant, and as a result were useless. Educators were none the wiser because they had not had practice or exposure to the curriculum before ordering the textbooks.

### *Parents*

The majority of participants felt that educators were not sufficiently supported by parents. They were dismayed that parents encouraged their children to oppose educators and speak disparagingly about them in front of their children.

Some educators were of the opinion that parents had abdicated responsibility for stimulating and teaching their children to educators. They felt that many parents needed support with regard to effective parenting and that the school was in a position to provide it, and should do so.

One participant acknowledged that there were support structures in place for parents and that the school was making an effort to draw in the community.

### *Learners*

Whilst some educators did acknowledge the challenge in managing the diversity of learners from different races, cultural, religious and language backgrounds, as well as different communities, their overall concern appeared to be how learners' education had been compromised by the state of education in the country.



Educators also commented on the general decline in learners' behaviour and how many of them were untidy and appeared to be lacking in personal pride.

#### **5.3.2.4      *Theme 4: Ideas shared by educators regarding their personal input and that from other stakeholders to support them in managing the changes more effectively***

##### *Personal input*

Educators who responded to this question named flexibility, emotional maturity in not taking things personally, and open and frank communication as necessary skills to manage change successfully. One participant acknowledged that some things cannot be changed and that one should rather change oneself, or one's mindset to accommodate them.

Pessimism and scepticism, particularly with regard to initiatives and policies from the DBE, were acknowledged as being threats to the effective management of change and, by implication, effective implementation of changes.

##### *Input from other stakeholders*

Educators expressed a need for a strong external network of support that would enable them to feel more supported, develop professionally and become better in their roles as educators. Some of these included: mentorship without judgement; sharing and exchanging resources with other schools to promote sustainability and development; motivation and encouragement from leaders to find solutions to challenges; and involving nongovernmental organisations for support instead of being reliant on government only.

With regard to support from within the school, educators would like space to express and communicate fears or concerns without being labelled as negative; support with regard to discipline issues; greater assertiveness by the senior management of the school towards the department district when they make unreasonable demands on educators that impact learning and teaching time; more efficient planning and sensitivity towards educators who have to manage learners when impromptu

decisions are made; providing equitable support across phases in the school; more time to complete administrative tasks; and a greater level of personal interaction and care.

Educators also expressed a need to improve relationships and partnership between themselves and parents. They wished for parents to become more involved and encouraged to participate; share their knowledge and information about their children to assist educators in assessing and meeting learners needs more effectively; and support their children more effectively through stimulation, care, adequate nutrition and expansion of their life worlds.

#### **5.4 CONCLUSIONS THAT HAVE BEEN DRAWN**

Conclusions have been drawn across two broad areas, one relating to the emotional impact of continuous occupational change, without sufficient support, on educators; and the second to current political and educational discourses that appear to be operating in the data collected from this group of educators.

In Chapter 2, Evans (1996:21) was quoted as writing that “for those who implement change, its primary meanings encourage resistance while provoking loss, challenging competence, creating confusion and causing conflict”. The research revealed this to be relevant to many educators. Many were grappling with the primary meanings of the changes in education, some resisting it, especially those who regretted losing aspects of the previous education system that they considered to be successful. The competence of many of these participants has certainly been challenged and some were angry.

Many educators at this school were feeling challenged in the face of curriculum, administrative, departmental, societal and other professional demands. They felt inadequately prepared to effectively address the challenges they faced, mostly unsupported by other stakeholders in the education system, with the exception of their colleagues, whose support they acknowledged and valued.

Evans (1996:28) and Fullan (2001:30) also referred to feelings of loss, anxiety and struggle that resulted from significant change. Educators in this study expressed such feelings in their reminiscences about aspects of the past that had been lost. Ironically, these belonged to groups referred to as 'previously disadvantaged' in South African terms. They also reported feeling pressurised and commented on conflicts among each other, with parents, seniors, department officials and other stakeholders at times. This is resonant with the views of Newstrom and Davis (1997:399) that "changes may lead to pressures and conflicts that eventually cause a breakdown somewhere in the organisation." It echoes the sentiment of the adage: If the pressure exceeds the resistance, the vessel will burst.

The second set of conclusions derives from the specific challenges that impact on educators and how they fit into broader political and educational endeavours and discourses. Prior to the research, the researcher's thinking was narrowly focused on the emotional impact of continuous occupational change on educators, but as the study developed equally significant insights began to develop, dramatically expanding the viewpoint of the researcher.

The first insight relates to the causes of educator overload and the current state of education. The literature reviewed presented findings that the curriculum is overloaded (Dada et al., 2009); too many assessment tasks (OECD Review Committee, 2008); increase in administrative tasks and workload (Chisholm et al., 2005), and a prediction that the administrative burden on teachers would multiply in the management of OBE (Jansen, 1997). All the above were reflected in the current experiences and challenges of the educators who participated in this study.

Jansen (1997) warned that OBE would fail, with justifiable reasons, as discussed in Chapter 2. Sixteen years later, the issues he warned about continue to be prevalent. Even though OBE has been discarded its legacy lives on as conscientious educators are battling inordinate amounts of administrative work, paperwork, content-heavy curricula, and large classes, among other problems (OECD Report 2008), and as confirmed by the study. Since then, four curriculum revisions have been made, but ironically, as an education system it is still not achieving the desired outcomes. This suggests that whilst it has changed it has not necessarily progressed. Inequality persists, as do high levels of illiteracy among school going children, and assessment

standards are not achieved by the majority of learners in South Africa (Annual National Assessment Report, 2012-13).

Two questions arose as this situation of educator workload was contemplated: Who or what is driving these educators into this frenzy? and why do they feel powerless to change the pace? Speculations pointed to current social, political and educational discourses in the following way.

With the advent of freedom and democracy after a long struggle, the new government wanted to break all ties with their predecessors and opted for an education system that was “sophisticated and progressive” (Le Grange, 2010). Notwithstanding the gross underestimation of the country’s teaching force to implement and deliver on such an idealistic system, and given the severe inequality that characterised the outgoing system, the new education department was going to make educators implement this idealised system, whether it was realistically implementable or not, in the context of the challenges, diversity and inequality characterising South African society.

Another irony is that, under apartheid, education for black people was designed to be deficient, the facilities being minimal and resources scant. Their competency base was designed to be deficient and a system of inequality was deliberately perpetuated. Educators from this system were now expected to implement and deliver a sophisticated, progressive, constructivist education plan, even though, for many, their circumstances and frames of reference had not changed. This reinforces Hugo’s (2010:7) point that middle-class children with strong family pedagogy would do well in this world while poor children from impoverished homes would have no background from which to work in this obscure world of hidden expectations.

The results of subsequent national and international benchmarking tests revealed that the majority of South African children were not achieving the prescribed educational outcomes and ranked lowest among participating countries. This probably persuaded education authorities to consider revision of the curriculum and putting systems in place to hold educators more accountable for their practices, hopefully developing their competence in the process.

Chisholm et al. (2005:34) describe 'accountability' and 'competition' as the lingua franca of a new discourse of power. In discussing the intensity and accountability theses emerging from post-industrial societies, Chisholm et al. (2005:35) write:

...even as accountability requirements may intensify work at a real and theoretical level, schools will vary enormously in how they respond to them – and those targeted as most in need of improvement through the new accountability mechanisms are least likely to be able to respond to them.

The conscientious, advantaged and competent educators who want to prove that they are competent, especially in the face of so much negative publicity, value accountability as evidence of their competence, becoming their focus as their real task is obscured. This may explain why educators feel pressurised to complete their syllabi, assessments and paperwork, fully aware that the children are being left behind. At the lowest level, teaching time is compromised in order to complete the administrative tasks that establish accountability at every level of the system.

The second insight relates to the degree of conflict and disharmony perceived in the relationships between stakeholders. In Chapter 4 this was linked to Lewin's group dynamic theory, which is the second theoretical framework on which this study is hinged. While this remains relevant, underlying political, global and relational discourses become evident as one senses their presence permeating several findings, as follows:

- The challenges experienced by educators with regard to their diversity exposes a political and relational discourse, confirming the researcher's opinion that stereotypes and classifications perpetuated and legitimised under the apartheid government persist. People from different racial and cultural groups continue to regard each other curiously, if not suspiciously, and that their preconceived ideas and stereotypes influence their perceptions of themselves and others, possibly resulting in division and compromising cohesion.
- A similar discourse may be underlying the relationship between educators and representatives of the DBE, including the principal, district officials and the education ministry or government. Furthermore, these stereotypes and

classifications are, paradoxically, perpetuated and legitimised by the current government, for different reasons, through policies such as affirmative action and employment equity. Possibly, the easiest way to elevate the previously disadvantaged and promote equity is to give them an unfair advantage or tip the scales in their favour. This may have evoked a discourse that people from previously disadvantaged groups may be appointed to positions possibly without the necessary competence to execute the task (see 4.3.2.1 par 3 for more detailed discussion). Consequently, this casts doubt on their competence, subjecting them to greater scrutiny or criticism and resulting in them having to work harder to prove their competence and credibility. Compounding the problem of confidence in the DBE is a belief that a far-reaching mistake was made in the decision to adopt the progressive, constructivist OBE to replace the fundamental pedagogy of CNE. This belief is shared by academics (Coolahan et al., 2008; Dada et al., 2009; Hoadley, 2011; Hugo, 2010; Jansen, 1997) and educators alike, as found in this study.

- A relationship dilemma of authority exists between educators, parents and learners, possibly influenced by a global discourse, focusing on the rights of children. Under South African law 'the child's best interests are of paramount importance in every matter concerning the child (Bill of Rights, 28.2, 1996), effectively relegating the rights of all other parties to a position of lesser importance. The OBE discourse similarly reversed roles between educators and learners, placing the latter in a central role and the former in a facilitating one. This seems to be a travesty of natural order as, in the researcher's opinion, children ought to be under the care, authority and guidance of adults or primary educators. Changes in those structural roles may manifest as children who are perceived to be undisciplined, do not listen and are disrespectful.
- Educators feel that many parents disregarded their authority and transferred this attitude to their children. The media often voices disparaging views of educators and many educators do disgrace themselves in ways that tarnish the reputation of members of the profession as a group. Furthermore, as the nation bears witness to a failing education system, generally poor learner

performance (Annual National Assessment Reports 2012-13), and persistently high levels of illiteracy among school-going children, educators are at the forefront of accountability and blame for that state of affairs.

A third aspect to consider is the degree to which educators may or may not find resonance with the basic principles on which curriculum changes in the last 20 years have rested. Several of the participants revealed that they preferred the old methods of teaching and even the old TED education system as a didactic tool, not necessarily the history it represented. Perhaps the difficulty is that curriculum change and principles in the last 20 years have not been based on sound ideologies or philosophies that were well entrenched and, therefore, failed to engender confidence in the people who need to implement them at classroom level. Soudien (2010:238) agrees that curriculum change was uncritically borrowed and poorly worked with, whilst Benham (1977:25) suggests that the reforms failed because:

The reforms were often 'installed', that is, teachers were told to find ways of implementing change models. No wonder they couldn't – or wouldn't – do it: even if they understood what was wanted, chances are that they didn't agree with much of it, and therefore would never feel genuine commitment to making it work.

In the light of literature it appears as though expert advice is repeatedly given and accessible, and the problems and challenges have therefore been identified. The empirical research reveals that progress is slow as challenges persist. What remains is the hope that research and practice will meet in a continuous process to find workable solutions.

## **5.5 RECOMMENDATIONS**

Much has been done, but more needs to be done if the country is ever to have an education system that accommodates, benefits and develops all or most of its children.

To this end, and based on the findings in this study, it is recommended that educators do the following:

- Reconsider their core responsibility towards their learners and perhaps shift their focus and energy away from the administrative tasks that provide theoretical evidence of their competence, to practical, competent action within their classrooms. This may enable them to slow down to an enjoyable pace and begin to transform their negative feelings into positive ones.
- Embark enthusiastically upon a continuous journey of self-discovery, reflection and personal development that will enrich and enhance their resilience and resourcefulness in challenging circumstance.
- Be motivated by Fullan's (2001:xi) optimism that "schools are beginning to discover that new ideas, knowledge creation and sharing are essential to solving learning problems in a rapidly changing society." They alone can give action to this vision.

The school management team should do the following:

- Work proactively to build effective professional relationships within their ranks, among the educators and between all stakeholders at the school.
- Harness every available resource to support educators, parents and learners to achieve the fundamental goal of every learning institution: development and progress
- Engage frequently and effectively with stakeholders to develop conscious awareness of the position, condition and needs of stakeholders, with particular focus on educators as the critical agents of the institution.

The school based support team should:

- Initiate and co-ordinate a staff wellness programme to enable the holistic support of educators and other staff members.

An additional point of interest is that perhaps educators would have been able to rejuvenate themselves with long leave, after a prescribed period of service, as was provided for under the old regime. Long leave is no longer offered to educators under the new dispensation.



## **5.6 AREAS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH**

In the South African context there is a strong focus on the identification of barriers to learning, particularly barriers within learners, and successfully including learners who experience such barriers. Given the evidence that frequent curriculum revision has not significantly improved learner capacity or performance it is necessary that research be carried out on the curriculum as a barrier to learning.

Another area of research that may benefit educators would be the successful implementation of inclusion by educators who are not trained in learning support and inclusion, in classes that are relatively large, and without the *in situ* assistance of teaching assistants or paraprofessionals.

## **5.7 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

Discourses relating to sexism and racism within certain cultural groups emerged very subtly, but these could not be fully explored as it would have compromised the identity of participants. The study was conducted with educators at a single institution and any generalisations made to other educators in similar contexts would be speculative. A profound limitation that applies to academic research is that it is usually only accessed by other researchers or interest groups, and seldom by people for whom it has the most relevance, such as educators and Department of Education officials, as in this case.

## **5.8 CONCLUSION**

It has been a privilege for the researcher to engage in this phenomenological journey of the lived experiences of educators at a full service primary school as they encounter transformation and continuous occupational related change. It provided an opportunity to engage with educators around issues of interest to the researcher, and gave the participating educators an opportunity to reflect on and engage with issues relevant to their profession. Educators seemed to enjoy the creation of a

forum in which to discuss and debate, and as one participant said, '*This has been more of a therapy session*' (F1D L698).

The findings were simultaneously disconcerting, thought provoking and interesting. The research revealed that educators are in crisis and, by default, so is the country's education system. If the situation does not change the prognosis for generations of children who traverse it is not hopeful.

In conclusion, the words of King Whitney Jr. are appropriate:

Change has a considerable psychological impact on the human mind. To the fearful it is threatening because it means that things may get worse. To the hopeful it is encouraging because things may get better. To the confident it is inspiring because the challenge exists to make things better.

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